

CANADIAN ART



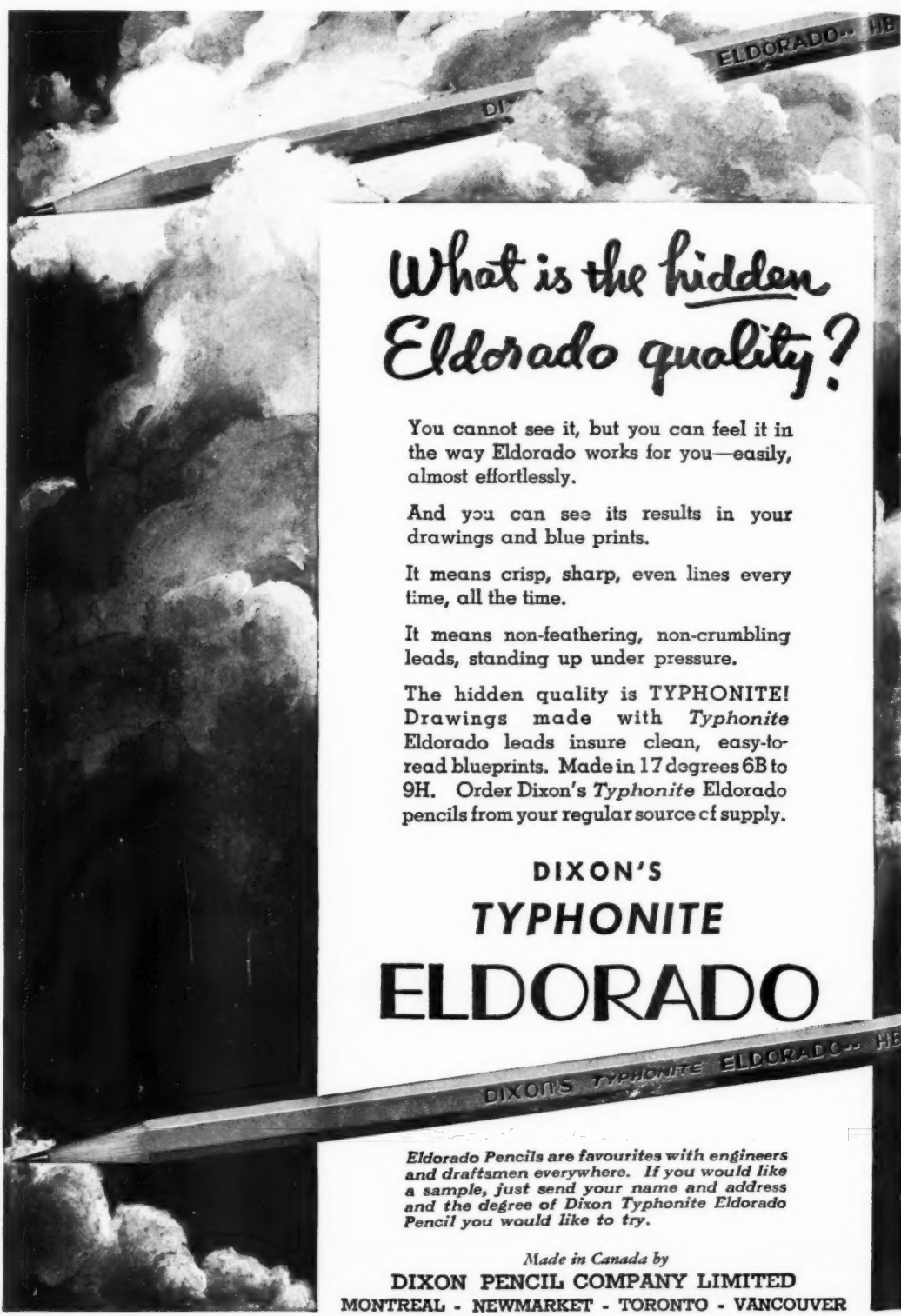
SPRING NUMBER

OTTAWA

VOL. VIII NO. 3

SPRING 1951

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CANADIAN ART

Spring Number

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Cover: F. H. Varley. *Mountain Lake*. Water colour. Collection: The National Gallery of Canada

CANADIAN ART VOL. VIII. NUMBER 3 SPRING 1951

PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES A YEAR UNDER THE DIRECTION OF A BOARD REPRESENTING THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY, THE WINNIPEG ART GALLERY ASSOCIATION, THE MARITIME ART ASSOCIATION, THE FEDERATION OF CANADA ARTISTS.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Yearly subscription: post free in Canada \$1.25, other countries \$1.50. Cheques should be made payable at par in Ottawa. 35c a copy. Authorized as Second Class Mail, Post Office Department, Ottawa. Advertising rates upon application. All articles are listed in the Art Index, New York, and the Canadian Index of the Canadian Library Association, Ottawa.

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CARL SCHAEFER

Farewell to Vermont

Water Colour

Collection: Mrs. J. G. Harvie

Canadian Painters in Water Colour

— A Silver Jubilee Exhibition

ANDREW BELL

WHAT is a water colour? For such a question our fathers would have had a pat answer. Above all a water colour was a "pretty" picture. The subject would be a pleasurable one, readily identifiable, and very probably it would be pastel in hue. The odds were on an aunt as the artist, and examples tended to gravitate to guest rooms and dark halls. Those who were technically minded would have added—"and the pigment is of the sort where water and not oil is used as the solvent." How thoroughly do many of our contemporary water colours confound this definition!

I am thinking of the large number of pictures, over a hundred, which were included in the silver jubilee exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour. This opened at the Art Gallery of Toronto in late January and included, by way of underlining the important twenty-fifth birthday, a small group of nineteenth century water colours and a few by founder members. Most of the exhibition, however, was devoted to new works.

Few of these were "pretty" in the above way, though in the broader sense these were important expressions of beauty. The range of colour was as complete as anything you might see in any display of oils. Similarly, subject matter was infinitely diverse with the emphasis much in favour of the sharply stylized or abstract approach. And it was abundantly evident that very little water is now required to bring a painting within the meaning of the term,—a water colour. Even a fresco would seem to be eligible. Or, as one wit put it, "the time has come for this organization to rename itself the Canadian Society of Painters in Mixed Technique."

But these quibbles are inconsequential. The operative element is the calibre of the work, and here this Society is the full equal of any organization exhibiting in Canada today. The

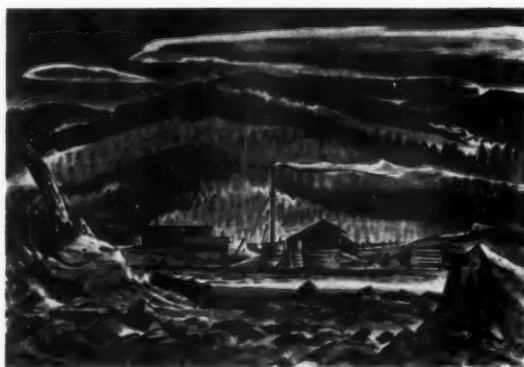
technical capacity is as high and the horizon of intellectual and aesthetic perception as broad. In short, the Society has good cause to celebrate its first quarter century.

How then did this Society come into being, and what in general terms are its achievements? For in no country, save perhaps England, have water colours achieved so national a stature. Go back to 1925. A group of eleven prominent Canadian water-colourists were unhappy about the state of their particular sphere. Water colour, they believed, was not necessarily just a sketching medium: within it lay potentialities for more important expression. And it was out of this belief that there emerged a society whose aim was annual exhibitions representative of the best of all schools of water-colour painting from coast to coast. During the intervening years progress has been rapid. By 1929, for example, the National Gallery was able to put on the first national travelling exhibition of works in this medium. In 1936, when Peter Haworth was President, a Dominion charter was secured. Then, too, over the brief twenty-five year period, twenty of the Society's exhibitions have voyaged abroad, visiting, in all, four continents. This organization has enjoyed an auspicious youth.

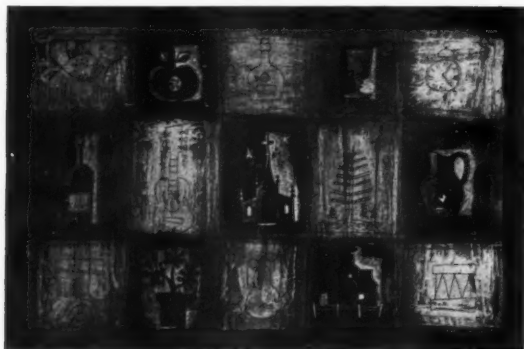
So much for background—what was the exhibition like this year? It has been said before that the various major art bodies in this country pride themselves on their points of difference, and a frequent reply has been that contemplation of recent annual exhibitions makes these distinctions look very small. The latter observation is applicable with substantial truth to the 1951 water-colour show. For instance, like the Canadian Group of Painters exhibition earlier in the winter season, too many pictures got in. I realize how, particularly this year, the Society was anxious to present a large display. Clearly also it is good that as many artists as possible should be given



ROLOFF BENY. *Still Life on Glencairn*



CARL SCHAEFER. *Mill on the Madawaska, at Whitney*



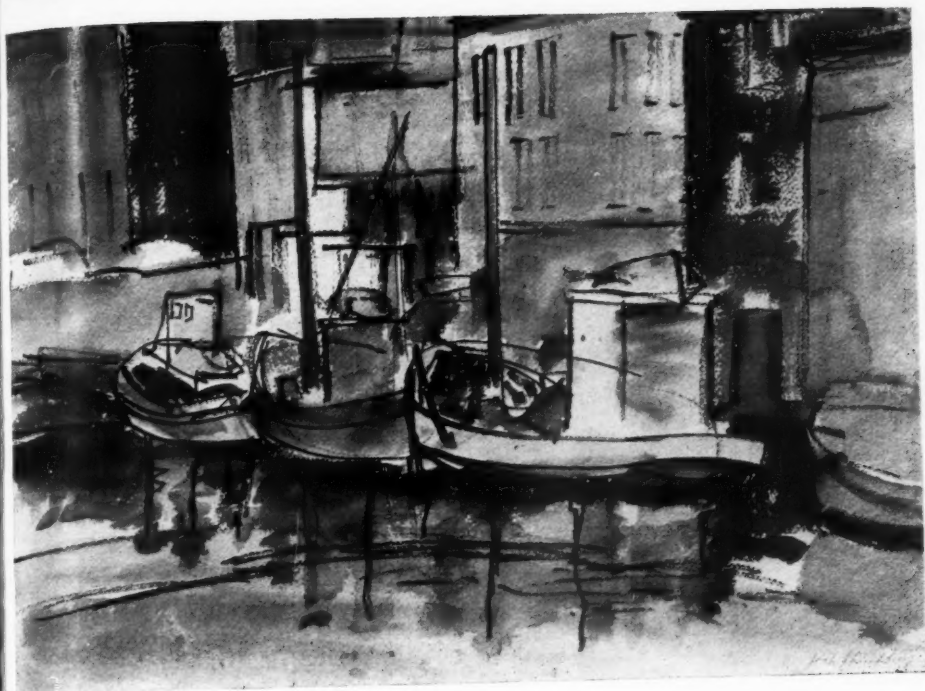
SYDNEY H. WATSON. *"Still Lives"*

the chance to have their work seen. But I question the value when, in consequence useful standards are compromised.

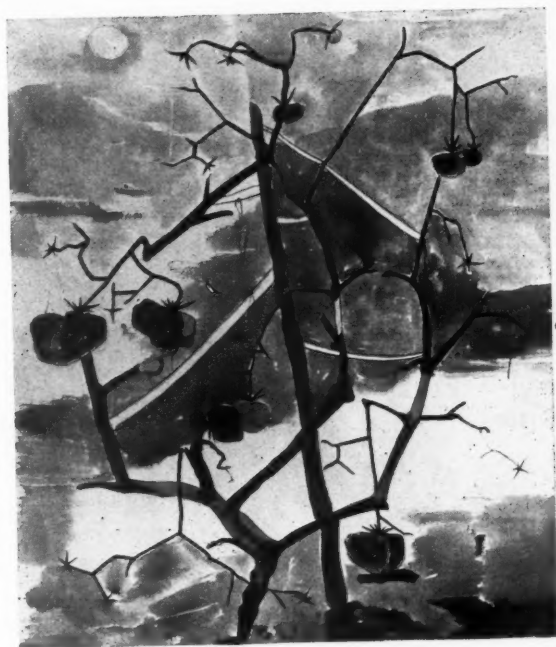
There is another common stricture which fits this exhibition. The founders of the Water Colour Society were out to demonstrate that, within its personal idiom, the medium could be the equal of any other as a means of significant artistic expression. And it is evident that they have made their point extremely well; indeed, to the extent vitality and freshness count, there is a strong case for the view that in these respects the Society is the peer of other Canadian art organizations. Yet in the crucial matter of pictorial content there is little to choose between them. Among all the aspirations are inadequate, the emphasis on trivia disappointing. It is obvious that from time to time painters will be preoccupied, to the exclusion of other things, with design for its own sake. It is so also that small subjects close to one's doorstep are valid topics for art. Moreover, it is painfully apparent that Canadian artists are not given to pondering big subjects, nor to working them up to their ultimate realization in impressive compositions.

One, however, must protest that, in this and analogous Canadian exhibitions, too few essay to create within a framework worthy of their intellect or their technical capabilities. Wreckage on a shore; eggs and milk bottles; plant forms: it is quite right that there should be paintings of them. But we live in a period which cries out for truth, truth freshly stated, be it ethical problems, adjustment to an era of science, or understanding of our brother. Ruskin said: "He is the greatest artist who has embodied in the sum of his works the greatest number of the greatest ideas." Whatever you think of his politics (and I detest them) Picasso's *Guernica* comes precisely within this class of painting. Whether we have in Canada a painter with like talent or potentialities is beside the point. What matters now is that our painters should turn their illuminating searchlight on such subjects, for we have need of their imaginative vision.

Purposefully I have not talked of individual works. There were a heartening number of admirable ones, from all parts of Canada, and happily several from newcomers. I am sorry



JACK HUMPHREY. *South Wharf with Three Boats*



BRUNO BOBAK
Tomato Vine



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1890-1945

Bay of Islands

that space so confines me. The Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour has done a great deal in its first quarter century to enhance the stature of its particular kind of art, and to add new words to the language

of painting. With the promise of the first twenty-five years we do not need to await a golden jubilee to pay these artists further court. It is, in fact, in our interest to keep an eye on them all the time.



MAXWELL BATES
Cathedral

Academies by Any Other Name — Some Provoking Observations

L. A. C. PANTON, R.C.A.

IN THE history of Canadian art, the last 50 years seems to offer unusually rewarding opportunities for studying the past and estimating the present. Surveys in other fields of Canadian activity end, almost without exception, it seems, on a note of enthusiasm for

successes. To appreciate the nature of these weaknesses, even dangers,—to unearth, so to speak, the skeleton in the closet—it is necessary to turn over the records of the last 50 years in a spirit that is more than usually critical. The past is past, but history tends

L. A. C. PANTON

*Landscape
in Ink*

*The Art Gallery
of Toronto*



what has been accomplished, and of optimism for the future. And there are many reasons why a report on art should end in the same way. We may all share in a little temperate jubilation over the more satisfactory aspects of its past development; but it would be unrealistic to assume that, because there is so much good in its present condition, what is not so good may be safely ignored. To this observer, at least, there appear to be some weaknesses in its present state of affairs which do not merit quite the same enthusiastic approval as is being given to its spectacular

to repeat itself. And what may be found to have happened once before, to the detriment of Canadian art, may, in fact, be happening again in our time, and with the same probable results.

Fifty years ago, art in Canada existed, like a genteel immigrant, in a state of complacent and undoubting loyalty to the ideas and traditions of those countries from which it had come. The pattern of its pioneer life was hard but simple, and it was natural that, at some time, it should aspire to the social dignity and prestige of an Academy, just as was the



L. A. C. PANTON

Nova Scotia Bay

custom in the homelands. When this institution, the Royal Canadian Academy, was established in 1880, there seemed every likelihood that its future was to be socially secure and comfortably uneventful. It assumed a monopoly of control that was almost completely uncontested until 1900. Whatever signs of the advent of challenging ideas there might be abroad, certainly none seemed at that time to have found sure footing in Canada. The Academy was safely enthroned as the official and dominant art body of this country.

Now this kind of domination, this control by one group over the destinies of art in any country, always has the characteristics and consequences of a minor autocracy. The members of its priesthood become addicted to form and ceremony for their own sake. They expect, as a right, to be consulted as eminent authorities on art matters, by governments, galleries and important institutions, and to be invited to sit on councils, and boards having to do with art. Public galleries are expected to give them specially favourable treatment in the purchasing and exhibiting of their works of art, and the officials of these galleries become, in some degree, an extension of the priesthood itself. It is a priesthood that, as time passes, sets up its own new gods, determines who shall be canonized as its "old masters", and admits to its ranks only those candidates having the most impeccable records

as conformists and followers. Its codes find their way into every area of art education and training, and the young artist learns that if he does not wish to be unwanted and unnoticed, he must follow the approved styles. To accomplish all this, the priesthood must maintain, or at least enjoy, the support of a sort of satellite "press" of writers and critics; indeed, the interests of the priesthood and its press inevitably become mutual.

This position of ascendancy is not attained by the priesthood by means of any Machiavellian conspiracies. The members of the group have usually been men of the highest, most unselfish motives, who have been carried along, all unaware, by the current of circumstances. At every stage they mean well, and do what they feel is the enlightened thing to do in each new situation. But they never pause to estimate the significance and dangers of the position into which their assumption of leadership draws them, and they never abdicate the throne out of any suspicion that their wisdom may at last be unequal to their responsibilities. They assume authority and enjoy the delusion of being progressive by conferring orthodoxy on a frugal selection of new ideas, recognizing none which cannot be fitted conveniently into the inelastic framework of their understanding. Their progress towards dictatorship is so insidious that they do not know that they have become dictators;

and it is not until some violence occurs to eject them from their office and shatter their organization that they realize, belatedly, that their actions which they themselves had thought enlightened and magnanimous had, in fact, been regarded by their victims as stupid and repressive.

This brief sketch describes, fairly well, the causes and characteristics of the eclipse which overtook the Academy in the first twenty years of the 1900's; charges which were frequently stated, and as often resented, in the bitter twenties. But let no reader deceive himself into believing that this applies only to Academies. Almost as soon as domination by one group is ended, domination by its successor begins. Whether it is an Academy with a constitution and by-laws, or a scattering of believers cohering without form or organization, each dominating group tends, like its predecessor, to become a despotism, maintaining itself in the same way by the same devices, and, once the first surges of its earlier inspiration have died, casting a deepening and lengthening shadow over the art activities of its times. The longer it stays in office and the firmer the position it secures, the more loudly it protests that its leadership is more liberal than ever, while its actions and opportunities

tend more and more to be those of a dictatorship, an Academy without a name. It becomes a new priesthood, demanding its rights of office, prestige and patronage; receiving support from its press, influencing professional training, and granting or withholding its quasi-official recognition as it will. Forgetting the reasons which prompted its own struggle against the restraints of an earlier day, it proceeds with a sense of altruism, and aided by the prestige of a past victory, to shape the art of the future into an image of its own ideas and its own tastes.

The liveliest and most stimulating, if not the most mature, periods in the history of the art of any country occur usually between the recession of one dominating influence and the accession of another. In Canada, for some ten years following 1920, this period was one of doubt and self-examination, experiment and controversy, and one during which a number of artistic forces were re-deployed to defend old or exploit new objectives which this controversy had brought into question. These were the days of the true Right, Left and Centre, of strong opposition against which new ideas must justify themselves completely in order to survive.

L. A. C. PANTON

*Study
in Storm,
Nova
Scotia*



The strength of the new movement in Canadian art of those days, however, was so great as, by 1930, to extinguish the Right and to absorb the Centre. The artists of the Centre abandoned their doubts and, with all the appearance of conviction, cast their lot with the avant-garde lest they too suffer the fate of the ultra-conservatives. Young recruits, impelled by their appetite for the novel, untutored but afraid of being extinguished before their careers were well begun, flocked to the banners of the new movement. Disagreement with the dicta of the new leadership became heresy. The smaller buds could now be cut from the plant in order to make a show-piece of the one which was selected to remain. The erstwhile rebels of the 1920's, who had become the acknowledged leaders of the 1930's, were now to become the artistic arbiters of the 1940's.

But the dominating dogma of today may become as sterile as that of yesterday; the wrong bud may be chosen to bear the inbred product of tomorrow. Art cannot for ever flourish in the sanctuary of the priesthood; it must be free. If art in this country is to be healthy and prolific in the future, all its buds must be allowed their places in the sun, and each given its chance and, indeed, be encouraged to develop naturally, protected from the pressures which limit growth to one direction. For who can say from which bud or buds

shall come the fresh and vital blooms of tomorrow?

The danger seems to lie, today, not so much in the drift towards an undoubting acceptance of the currently dominating trend, as in the increasing tendency to ignore art which in any way deviates from this trend and its standards. The truest and soundest development of the artistic potentialities of Canadian art requires that the spirit of the years from 1920 to 1930 be recaptured, that artists critically re-examine their beliefs in what they are doing and, more particularly, why they are doing it. It requires, too, that they revive in their own hearts the passion, not only for what they conceive to be right for themselves, but what may be best for the whole art of Canada. This necessitates, not a sacrifice of personal artistic predilections, but a wider and deeper sympathy for the predilections of others, and a retreat from the habit of measuring other artists' values by the too rigid yardstick of their own.

Too often, Canadian artists, writers and critics are being carried away, unresisting, by the propulsion towards the artificial and the esoteric, across a spreading gulf which isolates them from the earthier life behind them. The esoteric may die of its own refinements, and must learn to live side-by-side with the plain-speaking, if it is itself to remain healthy, and if art in this country is to flourish and maintain contact with the Canadian people.

Creative Craftsmanship in Jewellery

ROBERT AYRE

GEORGES Delrue, *joaillier-orfèvre* of Montreal, began as an apprentice at the age of fifteen and worked with a conventional jeweller for eleven years before he set up shop for himself. His doing so was an act of rebellion. Gabriel Lucas was a well established and respected craftsman who was particular about the quality of his jewellery and he gave his apprentice a good grounding in the essentials of his craft; but Delrue, as he grew older and developed his taste, found him old-fashioned, became more and more uneasy and at last had

to make the break. Since that time, only three or four years ago, he has succeeded in doing what he wanted to do—create something in jewellery corresponding to what is being done in painting and sculpture—and has been accepted as an original and distinguished artist in metals.

While he was working with Lucas, Delrue went to the Beaux-Arts in the evenings, to study design under Jean Simard and Maurice Raymond, and to the Ecole du Meuble for interior decorating and the history of art. His

friends were the young painters and sculptors, Alfred Pellán, Charles Daudelin, André Jasmin, Léon Bellefleur, Albert Dumouchel, Lucien Morin and Louis Archambault, and it was they who made him uneasy. Their work, he felt, belonged to the contemporary world and his didn't. He was ashamed of what he was doing, but apparently it didn't occur to him to abandon jewellery. Instead he asked himself why people who lived in modern houses, furnished with modern furniture and hung with modern pictures, should wear jewellery that in style belonged to past generations. He

began searching the European magazines and catalogues for contemporary jewellery designs and discovered such people as Jean Puiforcat, Raymond Templier, Georges and Jean Fouquet and Gerard Sandoz. Stimulated by them, by his friends, and by what he knew of the work of Arp, Miro and Lipchitz, he began sketching designs of his own, quite at odds with his work for Lucas.

Gone were the bows, knots, flowers and leaves and other frills and imitations; they gave way to a severely disciplined handling of abstract forms. It was no longer possible

GEORGES DELRUE

Gold and silver pendant with agate



to stay with Lucas. In 1947 he set up his shop in the one room where he lived with his wife, Denise Lavallée, a fellow art student, a painter whom he had married three years before. He had a few commissions from friends but it was hard going at first; his savings disappeared; but he refused to compromise. "I'd rather do nothing than a piece I couldn't approve", he says; and his wife encouraged him to persist in the way he had chosen.

Now that he is sought after, he maintains his integrity. He refuses orders from clients



GEORGES DELRUE. *Gold ring*

he knows wouldn't be satisfied with the kind of thing he does. The others have to accept him as he is. If you want one of his brooches or rings, you go to him and tell him what you want and he whips up half a dozen designs for you. But he won't work to your specifications; he keeps his independence as an artist and, knowing the way he looks at things, you have to trust him. Before he makes the designs, he has to know a few essentials, of course: how much the customer wants to spend, whether he wants yellow or white metal, whether a stone is required, and so on. As he gathers this information, Delrue uses a little psychology to size up the client and his tastes. A design, he says, will suit one

person perfectly and be quite out of character for another.

In jewellery there has been nothing really creative since the Middle Ages until now; he will tell you. At some periods, such as the eighteenth century, there were excellent craftsmen and the emphasis was on craftsmanship for its own sake; they looked for intricacy of design to prove their skill rather than beauty of line and mass. Delrue admires mediaeval design; he will even look farther back, to ancient Egypt and China. But he doesn't believe in trying to revive the past. He likes antiques but he doesn't think today's craftsmen should make antiques.

"Let us be contemporary," he says. "If we are really honest we will be true to the spirit of our own time." His jewellery is for adornment, but it is never pretty; it has a sort of architectural and sculptural severity. Each ring, you might say, is built; it is a sort of tiny engineering project.

Working within a strictly limited field, Delrue manages to produce an astonishing variety of designs. This is particularly true of his brooches, bracelets and ear-rings. He combines metals for contrast of surface and colour and makes good use of stones. While he can set a diamond to bring out all its lustre without allowing it to dominate, he takes as much pleasure out of enamels—some of them transparent and very effective—and agates picked up on the Percé shore of Quebec.

Montreal, long used to peasant handicrafts, has learned to accept the sophisticated artist-craftsman—people like Louis Archambault, the sculptor and ceramist, and Mme Desrochers-Drolet, of Quebec City, who does fascinating things with enamel on copper. Georges Delrue has gone a long way in a few years from his one room. His large new workshop is completely equipped and he has taken on a couple of apprentices. One criticism he has of the modern world, which otherwise seems to suit him very well, is the tendency to take short cuts. He has the old-fashioned idea that years of study and work under a master are necessary before you can call yourself a serious craftsman. If you are to be anything, you must break away from the master in the end, but you must have a solid foundation.

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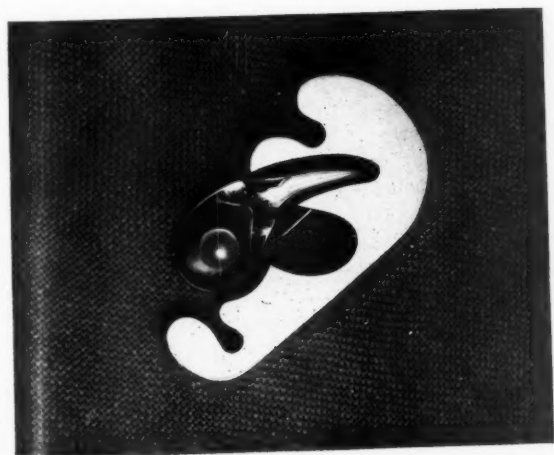
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GEORGES DELRUE

*Gold brooch
with lapis*

*Centre: Gold brooch
with amethyst*



GEORGES DELRUE

*Pink and white gold brooch
with pearl*

Georgian Bay Legacy

CHARLES COMFORT, R.C.A.

THE land mass lying beyond the eastern shores of Lake Huron, from Beausoleil Island to the mouth of the French River, is protected from the prevailing westerlies by a series of picturesque, rugged rock-bound islands. The full impact of these persistent winds is taken by these scattered outer groups, but even in the inner bays the pines are bent and twisted

Two mural panels by J. E. H. MacDonald in the cottage built by Dr. James MacCallum near Go Home Bay



in acknowledgment of the convincing power of the wind. These outer islands have been described by A. Y. Jackson as "the backbone of the world", a very apt description. They are low whale-backs of fundamental strata, describing in their convulsed fractures the heaving turmoil of creation; they support a few struggling conifers and juniper bushes, bent in some cases level with the rocks; a few reptiles prey on mice and frogs, and an occasional eagle nests near the gull rookeries.

About these harsh barren islands there is an undeniable fascination, possibly inherent in the manifest struggle recorded in their every line, perhaps in the sense of remoteness and stern resistance to the encroachment of man. Of course they are not always hostile; in the hot tranquillity of summer their wind-swept cleanliness and the infinite spaces surrounding them are enjoyed by scores of travellers, eager to experience their isolated beauty. The crystal-clear waters of Huron lap the shores, revealing countless rocky abstractions beneath; above glide expectant gulls, mewing in the visitors' wake. But he who travels in a small boat must be ever wary of a weather change; gentle as Huron can be, she is as capricious as a coquette. A morning of serene calm may change to an afternoon of calamitous seas. It is a region of great beauty and fierce contrasts; it can be stirring or contemplative; it is always provocative.

It seems natural that this region should attract adventurous spirits,—sailors, traders, priests, historians, and artists. Champlain and the early Christian missionaries looked upon these islands and saw them, no doubt, much as they are today. The last distant reach of the canoe route from Trois Rivières to the western land of the Hurons lay through these waters. In the *Jesuit Relations*, St. Jean de Brébeuf describes the joy he found in once more viewing the familiar headlands of Huronia after his long sojourn at Quebec.

In the first decade of this century, the distinguished oculist, the late Dr. James Mac-



F. H. VARLEY. *Squally Weather*. Sketch. The National Gallery of Canada

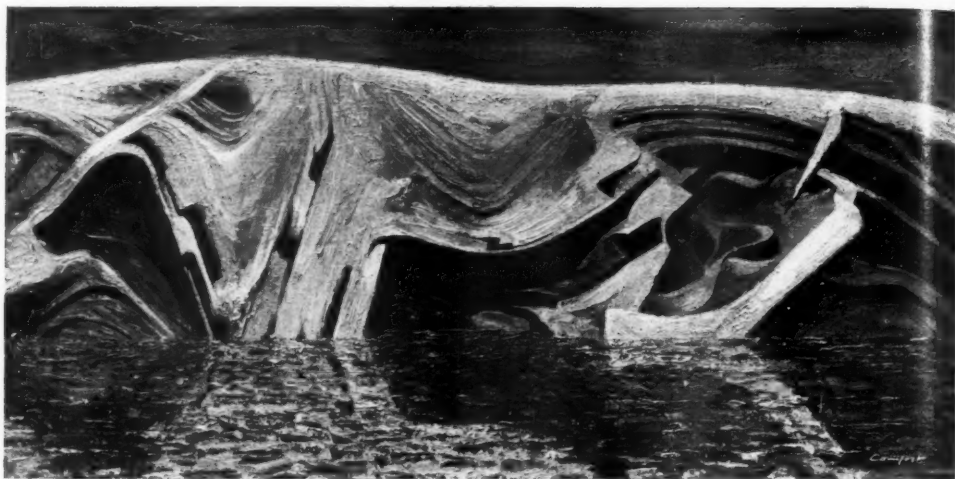
Callum, acquired a property in that part of Georgian Bay known as Monument Channel, near Go Home. Included were Split Rock and other attractive islands on the eastern side of the channel. On one of these he eventually built a rambling cottage with wide generous verandahs and a boat-house. One of his great interests was sailing and he brought a Norwegian-built sloop to the bay. Long before other cottagers had built, he and his sons were cruising in the outer bay and the lake beyond. It is said that as part of the training discipline he gave them the Doctor would often require the boys to sail around a given island, regardless of the weather, before they received any breakfast.

Dr. MacCallum was one of those imaginative Canadians who early recognized the value to our culture of a Canadian art movement. He knew personally many of the artists who were to contribute to the development of this movement, and it is due to his enthusiasms and hospitality that many of them found expression in the inspiration this region affords. The artists came to Monument Channel as his guests and several major canvases, now in

the national collection in Ottawa, were painted from sketches made on his island and in the surrounding district. The earliest of these is A. Y. Jackson's impressive canvas, *Terre Sauvage*, which formed part of the first exhibition of the Group of Seven. Painted in 1913, from sketches made almost in sight of the cottage, it portrays a wild wrack of spruce and pine beneath a vast and spacious sky. J. E. H. MacDonald once described this picture as "Mount Ararat after the flood", a friendly sarcasm which suggests much of the quality of wilderness implied in the canvas.

In 1915 Tom Thomson came to the cottage and later completed his important canvas, *Split Rock Island*, now in the public art collection of Kitchener, based on sketches made near the island. On a second visit he moved out beyond the channel to the Pine Islands, where he painted another fine composition bearing that name. In 1922 both Fred Varley and Arthur Lismer painted at MacCallum's Island and found inspiration for their two great paintings, Varley's *Georgian Bay** and Lismer's *Septem-*

*The sketch, *Squally Weather*, on which this painting was based, is reproduced above.



CHARLES COMFORT. *Split Rock Island*

ber Gale. Other members of the original Group, notably MacDonald, were guests over the years.

In revisiting the locations which inspired these canvases, it is interesting to note, making due allowance for the development and change wrought in the passage of years, to what extent these artists improvised on the objective material before them, and to observe what they selected. It would appear that Varley took few liberties with the subject matter of his *Georgian Bay*. Although there has been some change in the tree which dominates his canvas, it remains much the same today as it appears in his canvas. The other properties have been arranged to meet the artist's requirements of form and emphasis, but the documentary features of the composition, such as Split Rock and the Giant's Tomb in the distance, have been converted to the needs of the composition by Varley's own lyric artistry.

The painting *September Gale* is more difficult to pin down. The physical elements in the canvas may have been obtained from a number of sketches made from the verandah of the cottage, or near it, looking south. The artist's powerfully dynamic realization and his free creative improvisation make the exact location of the site an inconsequential matter.

The cottage itself is of great interest to the student of Canadian painting. It is a rambling Y-shaped structure, designed largely by Dr.

MacCallum himself, in collaboration with Professor C. H. C. Wright of the School of Architecture in Toronto, and built in 1911. Its style is of little consequence, but the associations surrounding the cottage, and the mural decorations in the living-room, are of great interest and value as Canadiana.

During the early years of World War I, Dr. MacCallum, becoming conscious that the artists were obtaining little work to do, conceived the idea of having the living-room of the cottage decorated, and commissioned them to paint mural panels of an informal nature. Thomson, MacDonald and Lismer all contributed; Jackson was an infantryman in France at the time. There are nineteen panels in all, of which MacDonald's are possibly the finest. Two of these exist on either side of a massive stone fireplace. The left-hand panel celebrates the history of "the Bay" and includes a Huron Indian, a Jesuit priest teaching Christianity to a child, and a figure possibly intended to be Champlain. The right-hand panel honours local industry, a trapper, a fisherman, and a lumberjack. The head of the lumberjack is reputed to be the only painted portrait of Tom Thomson in existence, which lends to the panel a considerable national importance. MacDonald's other contributions are an upright panel on the north wall, which contains sketches of both Jackson and Lismer in a moving local setting, four other panels which

are contemplative fragments depicting native trees in varied seasonal garb, and, on the north wall, the supply boat "John Lee", tied to a gigantic rock, eagerly attended by local cottagers.

Lismer's contributions include panels of bird life, island recreations, and, on the south wall, a large composition in gay holiday spirit of a group of vacationers picnicking in the sunny island spaces, delighting in the surrounding beauty. As well as the living-room decorations, Lismer painted on the boat-house a Chinese dragon, celebrating his rather exotic interest in the Chinese theatre. Though time has almost obliterated it, this oriental rondel continues to

When Dr. MacCallum died in 1945, there was great concern among those who knew the island cottage on Monument Channel. Would the heirs dispose of it, and to whom? Would the cottage and its murals be appreciated and cared for? It was known that before his death Dr. MacCallum had offered it to the National Gallery but, apparently for certain legal reasons, the gesture failed. A year ago the problem was happily solved when the island was purchased by Henry R. Jackman, Esq., of Toronto. In Mr. and Mrs. Jackman the tradition of enthusiasm for Canadian art and of hospitality toward Canadian artists is continued, and with it they bring

A. Y. JACKSON
Terre Sauvage
The National
Gallery of Canada

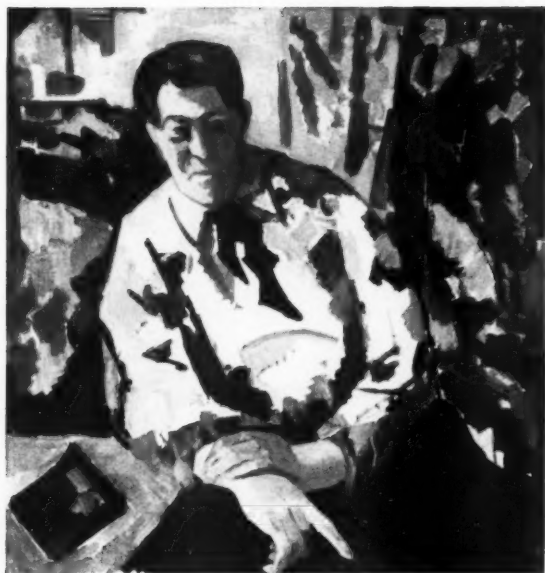


fascinate and confound all who pass within sight of it.

There are three Tom Thomson panels, each a decorative treatment of wood interior foliage in very low tonalities.

No attempt has been made to design the living-room murals as an ensemble except in the case of the two fireplace panels. The general effect is one of colourful airy buoyancy which suggests that they were painted for the private satisfaction of Dr. MacCallum, his family, and his friends.

a wholesome respect for and pride in the region, the island, the cottage, and its decorations. The legacy of those who have and will find inspiration in Georgian Bay and its countless islands is in trustworthy hands. This year A. Y. Jackson returned to this scene of early achievement and found that it still moved him to thought and action. There is no surcease in the power of the region to inspire; the painted statement may be made in different terms, but the Canadian theme will persist.



Aleksandre Bercovitch 1893-1951

M. REINBLATT

*Portrait of
Aleksandre Bercovitch*

A retrospective exhibition of paintings and drawings by Aleksandre Bercovitch was formally opened, early in January, at the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association in Montreal. This should have been a great occasion for the artist because, although he had exhibited with the Eastern Group and in the Spring Show and with the Academy from time to time in the past, he had not shown his work publicly for some years and he had never had a one-man exhibition in Montreal, where he had lived a quarter of a century. A large crowd assembled at the opening to do him honour but the painter himself was not present to receive the tribute. No one knew that he had dropped dead in the street a few hours before. The following note of appreciation was written by M. Reinblatt, the young Montreal painter and teacher who was his friend and one-time pupil.

ALEKSANDRE Bercovitch was born at Cherson in the lush country close to the city of Odessa. His first lessons in art were given him by monks who made icons and it was typical of the diversity of his life that in his youth he should exchange the austerity of the monastery for the greatly different atmosphere of the theatre. In Odessa he did the décor for *Tristan and Isolde*, *Prince Igor* and other operas and later he assisted the famous Léon Bakst in his stage-setting for *Scheherazade* in St. Petersburg.

As a young man he travelled to Jerusalem, where he studied under Professor Schatz, who had established a school of art there. A scholarship enabled him to go to Munich at

the time when the German expressionists were making their experiments and beginning to have their powerful effect on western art, and he stayed there until the outbreak of the first world war, when he returned to Russia.

Very soon after the revolution of 1917, Bercovitch went to Turkestan and settled in Achibaud, where he organized an art school. One remembers how colourful a story-teller he was in his reminiscences of this period. He was a romantic and this town, which was a meeting place for camel trains carrying all sorts of goods from far-flung places, permitted full play to his imagination.

In 1927 he arrived in Montreal with his family and began an unending struggle to

exist as an artist, decorating houses, painting bill-boards and teaching. He occasionally designed stage-sets for small theatre groups. Gradually he found friends and patrons, and he received portrait commissions, but the way was never smooth and recognition came tardily.

Bercovitch worked a great deal in the Gaspé Peninsula and in Quebec City, where he had some very good friends. The Gaspé paintings will find their niche in Canadian art as fine and poetic interpretations of that beautiful and moody country. His portraits, flower pictures and views of Quebec streets rank him as a pastellist of the first order.

He was not a formalist, either in theory or technique. He understood abstract art but felt, as does de Segonzac, that it is the structure upon which all great painting is built

and not an end in itself. Bercovitch was too moved by the visual aspect of the world to turn inward solely for his inspiration. He was too anxious to communicate simply with others. This impulse to share made him a good teacher from whom one learned to have an abiding love for art.

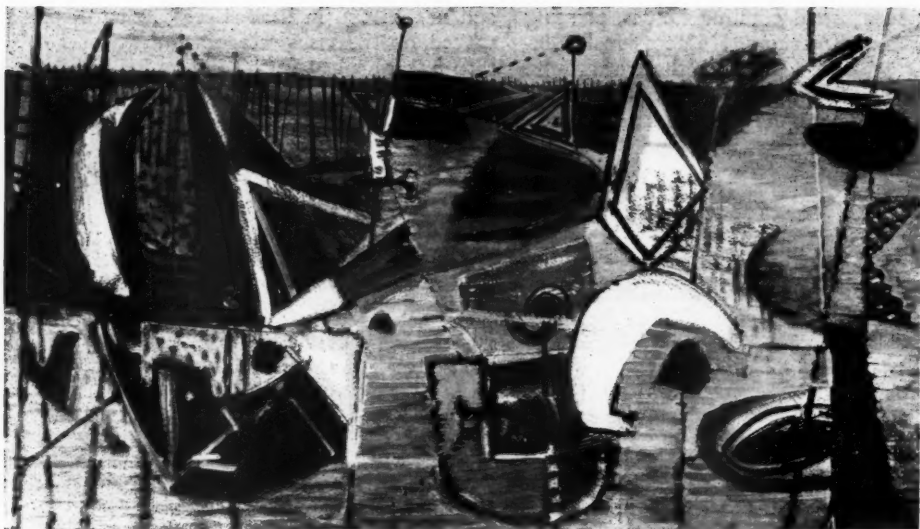
That he did not fulfil his ambition to do figure composition on a large scale, that he did not succeed in communicating the fullness of his rich experience, was his loss but it was more greatly ours. He was one of that brave company of men who live enough in their art to sacrifice all the comforts of everyday life so that they may discover the world for others to see and take pleasure in. It is always a warming and heartening revelation of the courage and the will to expression of the human spirit. It brings us solace and inspiration.

M. REINBLATT

ALEKSANDRE BERCOVITCH. *The Brothers*

Collection: Saul Shapiro





J. L. SHADBOLT. *In the Marsh Grasses.* Ink and casein

J. L. SHADBOLT. *Jesting Grasses.* Ink and casein





J. L. SHADBOLT

*At the Edge
of the Dark*

Ink and casein

Shadbolt Explores a World of Roots and Seeds

MANY turbulent changes have taken place in the paintings of Jack Shadbolt during the last few years. He now, however, seems to be entering a period of greater calm in which his work shows a happier balance between natural forms and intellectual abstractions. But this he has only obtained after a difficult course of incessant experimentation.

Preying yellowish dogs, haunting ash-grey

ruins, were typical of his compositions at one time. For example, certain water colours of his, when shown in Toronto in 1948, led Andrew Bell to write in comment: "Do you believe that civilization is literally going to the dogs—that they alone will be the heirs of mankind's idiotic warring? J. L. Shadbolt, West Coast painter, seems to think it quite possible."

As the artist himself explains: "Following the war I was so moved socially by the increasing destruction of individualism in personality that I was straining to make relentless symbolic images of this 'state of man'. I was obsessed with tortured and emaciated forms, heraldic colour and the strongest contrasts. My form, tending toward the skeletal, had become an angular wrack in which was trapped my violent image."

During 1948-49 Shadbolt spent a year in New York taking advanced studies at the Art Students League, and there he became involved in an intense search for ever bolder and more expressive forms. But, before he left New York, he found he was "fed up" with his own tension and he resolved to find some way of obtaining equal strength by gentler means.

Back at his old job of teaching in the Vancouver School of Art, he is now busy planning with his wife to build a home and settle down permanently on the West Coast.

"Sublimation of violent moods is easier under these conditions", he writes, "and I have begun to transfer my attention once again to the growth cycle of nature". He adds that he has found "the perfect, indirectly symbolic images", he was seeking, "in the birth and struggle under the earth to break through in the flowering, withering and return to the earth of plants,—or in the drama of the minute life among the grass stems. Because I find all this somehow symbolic of the larger world and larger meanings, I am trying to find an abstract paraphrase of this core theme. So I immerse myself in nature, but when I paint I put nature behind me and try to conjure up new inventions of form".

There is a lyrical quality now in Shadbolt's work which does much to balance his previous excessive intellectualism. Of course, many spectators will continue to find his paintings both difficult and obscure. Such persons need to approach these pictures with the same open mind they would give to a study of certain

poetry, which often uses symbols taken from nature in a similar personal way to give expression to human actions and emotions. If they do so, the significance of Shadbolt's compositions will soon be largely revealed to them.

The more mentally contrived and tortured compositions which he did while in New York are not reproduced here. What are shown are paintings completed in Vancouver during 1950 and the early months of 1951. In most of them he offers us immediate clues linked to natural forms. Some of them are of grass and seeds, viewed with the mysticism of Blake ("To see a World in a Grain of Sand"), or with the imagery of T. S. Eliot ("stirring dull roots with spring rain"). They seem like fragments of nature acting out an unconscious drama, as if one had come unawares upon some mysterious life-giving ritual among plant cells and seeds and roots.

"I have tried to be inventive," explains Shadbolt, "to make these forms intricately interdependent, to accept the picture as a creation in itself with its own organized movements on the surface and in space, and I have tried to restrict the colour to one haunting theme of earth colours in which smoulder fragments of clear blaze. Above all I have tried to make my pictures a delight for the senses—an exploration of the unexpected and in this regard I have tried to endow shapes with their own unique personalities. . . ."

In many passages in these paintings there is a disarming spontaneity which is new to Shadbolt, as are also these free flowing forms which are so different from his earlier tighter and more angular conceptions. His recent achievements, at their best, combine lyricism, regionalism (his inspiration comes from West Coast flowers and plants and marshlands) and abstraction—three qualities which haven't appeared together this way in Canadian painting before.

DONALD W. BUCHANAN

Reflections on Canadian Ballet, 1950

GUY GLOVER

TAKE an art which, for three hundred years, was the special and protected property of the European *élite*, remove it from the hot-house atmosphere of royal courts, transplant it to North America and thrust it before a mass audience. What happens?

Between April 18th and May 15th, 1950, I saw what the citizens of one country in the new world were doing with the recently "democratized" art of ballet. In order to get a bird's eye view of this one cultural expression I had to travel over six thousand miles—the country being Canada—and I realized, as I never had quite realized before, the part played by miles in complicating the integration of cultural life in this large country. Mathematically, it would seem, Canadian cultural development *equals* our cultural energy *times* the material and financial resources per capita available for its expression *divided* by transportation and distribution costs per mile. And our relatively small population is the embarrassed, if proud, possessor of so many miles!

In spite of this absolute burden Canadians have found ways to develop their cultural life and are grappling with the problem of giving that cultural life some national integration. The larger regional festivals are one of our ways towards it. Even more explicitly so are the festivals of national scope: the Dominion Drama Festival with a history of nearly twenty years, and more recently, the Canadian Ballet Festival. Each of these efforts towards integration has been fraught with financial hazards since its inception and each has triumphed over them by a combination of individual ingenuity and sacrifice, and audience support. Of government assistance (either federal or provincial) there has been little so far, although there are signs that this kind of support may be added in the not too distant future.

In February 1950 I was appointed adjudicator for the 1950 Canadian Ballet Festival Eliminations. The holding of eliminations was

a departure from the procedure in the two previous festivals, which were open to all comers. However, remembering the number and widely varying quality of the 1949 entries, the committee of the Canadian Ballet Festival Association felt that the 1950 Festival, if it were to show a marked improvement, should have a more selective basis. Hence the decision to hold eliminations and to appoint an adjudicator. During these elimination tests I visited cities from Vancouver to Halifax and saw twenty companies in around fifty dance works.

For the purposes of adjudication the companies were required to present their ballets on a stage (studio performances were ruled out). Scenery, costumes, lighting and orchestra were not required, although these might be included if they were ready. The company

Jean McKenzie and Arnold Spobr in Ballet Premier, presented by the Winnipeg Ballet



was asked to submit sketches of the stage and costume designs if the real thing were not available at the time of adjudication.

I made my adjudication on the basis of choreography and dancing in ballets newly created by Canadian choreographers. For works from the classic repertory, which had been "recreated", I had to make some estimate of how faithfully this recreation had been carried out. This kind of estimation is a most difficult task and one which only very few people are actually equipped to do in detail. I am not one of them and my judgments of the classic works were of a general nature only and were concerned chiefly with stylistic approach and not with a detailed analysis of the steps. In any case, most of the classical reconstructions which were attempted by Canadian companies were abridged and so heavily adapted by various choreographers that, to compare them in detail with the original, if this were possible, would be a depressing job. It is my opinion, in this connection, that most companies, in their present state of technical development, should not attempt to present the classic works to the public. I do not question their right to study them for studio performance—this, in fact, is most valuable. But until dancers of sufficient technical power and sense of classical style are formed the performance of works such as *Les Sylphides* and *Swan Lake* can be only a source of pain and embarrassment to everyone—including the general public, which has suffered, without perhaps knowing precisely why, as much as anyone else. This was my opinion when I saw such works at the time of the eliminations in the spring, and even when I saw them, much better prepared and mounted, at the Festival itself.

Of the original works created by Canadian choreographers one can say that great and amazing progress has been made. The chief faults can be traced, naturally enough, to inexperienced, lack of opportunity to see a work performed in its entirety enough times, and a certain lack of daring and taste in the choice of subject-matter, music and décor. Added to this is the necessity, on the part of most Canadian choreographers, to work with inexperienced companies or even groups of

dancers to which the name "company" can be applied only very loosely. Many groups have hardly any "company" psychology or discipline, being composed of amateur dancers who think, because they are part-time participants and unpaid, that they are entitled to skip rehearsals and to complain long and bitterly about sore feet and fatigue. A good amateur dancer, to say nothing of a professional, should not be guilty of this sort of attitude, and I hold the directors of the company more than a little responsible for this lack of proper morale.

Once again (I remarked on this in 1949) the choice of music was, on the whole, disappointing. There was, it is true, four original scores by Canadian composers and I should mention them: Dolores Claman's score for *Rêve Fantastique*, presented by the Ballet Concert of Vancouver; Jean-Papineau Couture's for *Tittle-Tattle*, presented by the Ballet Ruth Sorel of Montreal; Ed Assaly's for *Carrefour*, presented by the Elizabeth Leese Ballet, also of Montreal; and Eric Wilde's for the comedy ballet, *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*, danced by the Winnipeg Ballet. These were all interesting and effective examples of good theatre music and the directors of the companies are to be congratulated for their support of the Canadian composer.

The 1950 Festival was held during the week of November 20th at His Majesty's Theatre in Montreal. There were eight performances, not as well attended as those of 1949 in Toronto. The aesthetic significance and achievements of Canadian choreographers and dancers came apparently as a surprise to the population of Canada's largest city and it was not until the Festival was half over that it began to fill the theatre.

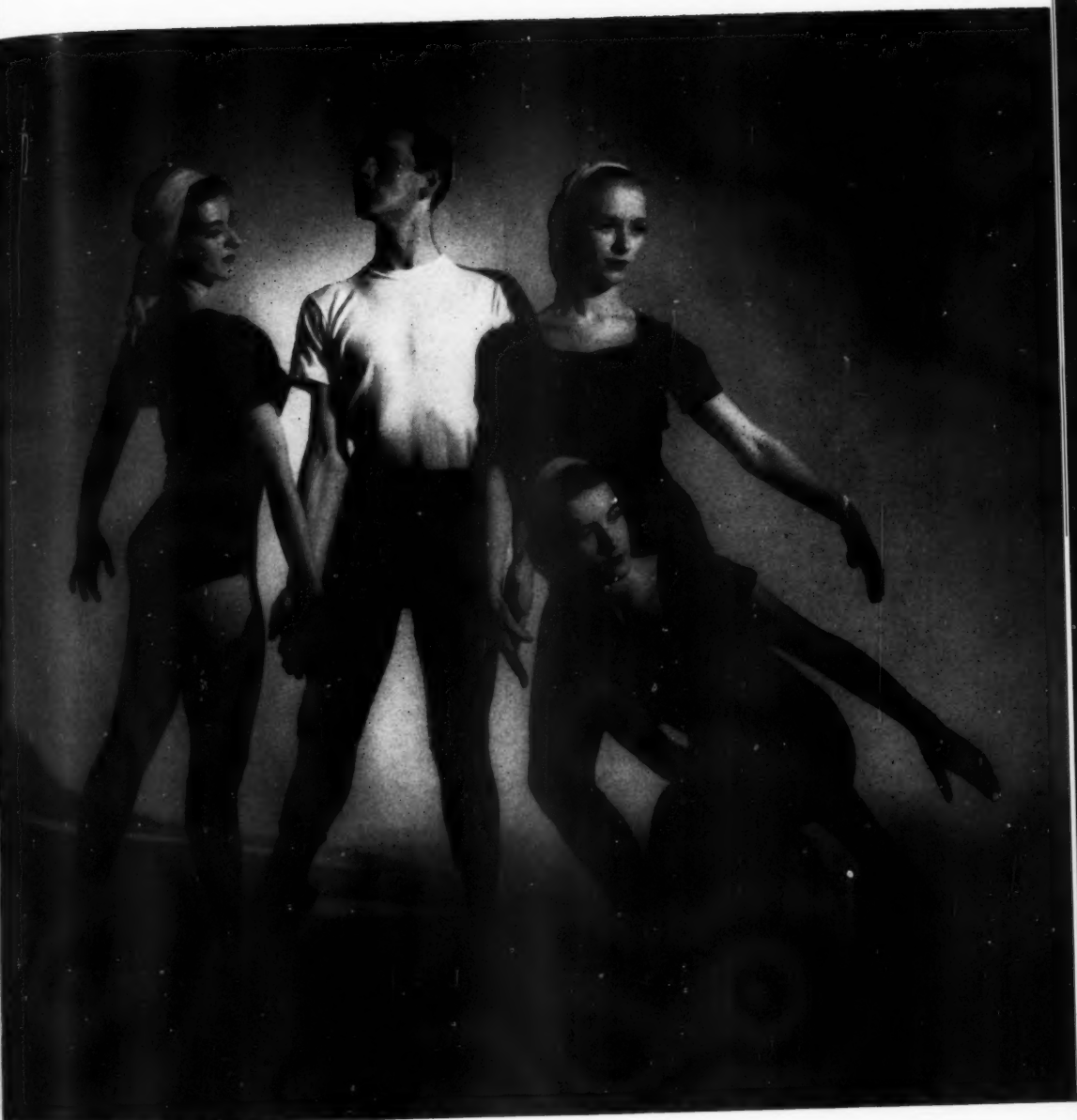
I attended the Festival as a member of the audience, not as an adjudicator, since the Festival is non-competitive. As ex-adjudicator, however, I was particularly interested in what progress had been made by the different companies, during the six months since May. In the eliminations I had noted a general lack of musicality in the dancing, an insensitivity in the upper part of the body, especially in the use of arms and carriage of the head. At the Festival, although this still could be

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Kay Armstrong, Ray Moller, Margaret Elmgren and Anita Barnett in Étude, presented by the Ballet Concert of Vancouver



Scene from Coppelia presented by the Classical Ballet Company of Ottawa

said in general criticism, a marked improvement could be noted in most companies. One could see the results of hard work, too, in the way theatrical effectiveness had been heightened, the pacing improved in the smoothing of transitional passages, and in the better timing of entrances and exits. Such points, minor in themselves, can make or break a ballet.

I was specially interested in the décor and costumes which I had not seen in the elimination performances. These were, on the whole, adequate but not markedly creative. There were at least two examples of colossal bad taste, nightmare reminders that artists' sketches are not an adequate guarantee of the finished product.

The most successful décors were often the simplest. Here, that old Canadian bugbear, the cost of transportation, had a good effect, since companies travelling long distances could not afford to bring great quantities of scenery. They used the black curtains, standard stage equipment at all festivals, as the background for their dancing. Luckily, black curtains, if the dancing area is interestingly lit, make a most satisfactory dance background although their virtue as decoration is largely a negative one.

Where decoration was used, distinctive patterns often threatened to overpower the dancing—the balance between colour masses, linear patterns and the dance patterns being misjudged. Costumes were sometimes interesting in themselves, but poor in their *ensemble* effect.

I think it would be fair to say that even the most successful décors seen at the Festival showed little of the vitality and strength which we associate with Canadian easel painting. Although an excellence at the easel does not mean excellence in the scene-loft, I should have thought that painters in this country might have been interested to make an attempt in this field, but certainly no Canadian painter of reputation has recently been attracted to do so. On the contrary, in England, Graham Sutherland, John Piper, Michael Ayrton, McKnight Kauffer, and others have not left stage decoration wholly in the hands of the stage decorators proper. Also many French painters have designed for the ballet. Here, it is true, Pellán has dabbled in the theatre (I once saw a performance of *Twelfth Night* by Les Compagnons obliterated by a dazzling Pellán décor), La Palme in 1945 painted a witty back-drop for a number in a Fridolin review, and there have been others—but not many. I could certainly imagine interesting stage designs from Borduas, Shadbolt and Nichols, to mention only three names which occur to me at the moment. Of course, the directors of ballet companies have got to get to know the artists—in fact, that getting to know what is going on in other creative fields is the next step in the development of the Canadian choreographer and dancer.

As an example of companies which used the simple back-drop with scarcely any scenery, but with imaginative lighting and tasteful costumes, to achieve an excellent effect,

were the Ballet Concert of Vancouver and the New Dance Theatre of Toronto.

Once again in 1950 the best company, by common consent and in my own humble opinion, was the Winnipeg Ballet. In the works it presented and the technical intelligence with which these were produced, in the standard of the *ensemble* dancing and the fine style of the principal dancers, this group has made amazing strides in the past year, ahead even of its previous advanced position in relation to other Canadian companies. There, of course, is the point. It is a company, or closer to it than any other, thanks to the Winnipeg citizens who have seen to it that their dancers have the support of a community organization. Last year the principal dancers of the Winnipeg Ballet were paid a retaining fee so that they could afford to work part-time at non-dance jobs and, consequently, devote more time to ballet than their counterparts in other companies. The Winnipeg dancers have been excellently trained by Miss Gweneth Lloyd and, since her departure to Toronto, by Miss Betty Farrelly. It has a very good repertory of original ballets by Miss Lloyd including *Visages*, *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*, *The Wise Virgins*, *Concerto Arabesque*, as well as a number of very well-prepared excerpts from the classic repertory (although not, be it noted, *Swan Lake*, Act 2, or other complete or near-complete "classical" works). It has, in addition, a new work, by one of its leading dancers, Arnold Spohr, entitled *Ballet Premier*. This ballet proves Spohr to be a most talented choreographer, the first native Canadian, in fact, to compose a completely realized ballet. Mr. Spohr, a trained pianist as well as dancer, has, in *Ballet Premier*, composed a dance work which is worthy to take its place in the repertory of any dance company alongside the creations of the half-dozen internationally recognized choreographers. It is to be hoped that not only the Winnipeg Ballet but other Canadian companies will be able to make use of his great talent before he has been snatched away to London, New York, or Paris.

Continued on page 125

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MONTREAL

Architectural Competitions — Can They Help Us to Obtain Better Public Buildings?

The designs for new public buildings in Ottawa, as reproduced in our last issue, brought forth a number of interesting letters from our readers; they also resulted in the appearance of an important article on the same theme in a Manitoba publication. Besides some extracts from this article, we also print a long and valuable letter, which was sent us by Alex Colville, a former official war artist, who now teaches at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick. Much is said by these writers about the desirability of architectural competitions; in this connection we reproduce photographs of two new buildings, the designers of which recently won Massey Medals for Architecture.

"IN THE dry clear air of the prairies", write R. C. Hale and H. A. Elarth of the School of Architecture at the University of Manitoba, "the outlines of Ottawa's new buildings to-be come into a sharp, if not consistent, focus". Under the title of "The Future Architecture of Ottawa", their criticism appeared in the university publication, *Perspective*.

"In the preliminary report on the National Capital Plan," they state, "we read that discipline, order and control are the vital principles, which, without meaning monotony, are essential for the preservation of an atmosphere of dignity, stateliness, and natural beauty".

They agree that these principles are sound but they find reason to question whether they have been properly carried out in these new buildings.

They then give detailed comments beginning with the Department of Veteran Affairs building. Of its actual design, as illustrated in *Canadian Art*, they are critical, and they add: "In the units themselves we see a series of surface setbacks and façade breaks which have no apparent relation to internal use, or to clear monumental expression, if that were desirable. Two mighty tower bastions capped by peaked roofs climax the Lyon Street corners of this bisected building and appear to frown at each other with military rectitude. Above the cornice lines appear the monotonous sloping roofs conforming to those of the nearby Supreme Court—themselves of questionable form today. Is this not a contradiction of the principle of harmonious contrast recommended in the plan? Must the medieval sloping roof which has dubious value functionally and aesthetically, even as an old Ottawa tradition, be continued *ad nauseam* in spite of the clearly defined principles of the Plan?"

"The new home-to-be of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation", they believe, "has aspects to be commended over that of its fortress-like associate on Wellington Street. Here we see

evidence of a sense of human scale and a friendliness, qualities desirable in the headquarters office for a crown corporation dealing with housing." Yet they are doubtful of its "modified Georgian envelope" with its "minimum light-admitting colonial fenestration", and they ask the question: "Do the dynamic complexities of modern corporate office organization lend themselves so precisely to this statically balanced array of pseudo-Georgian seen through the wide-angled lens?"

"This building may be considered by some as photogenic, full of old country second-hand charm". And they add a warning, "... it may even imply a future policy of spreading hundreds of Georgian crescent-housing projects throughout Canada. Shades of eighteenth century London and Bath! And yet we believe CMHC is rational in its approach to today's housing problems and is sponsoring developments having social, economic and cultural significance for our times. Why then must we find this romantic flash-back to yesteryears?"

Their article concludes with the following constructive suggestions:

"With awareness can we not raise our sights and suggest the means whereby the critical design level of future buildings intended to have national significance can be propelled upwards? On the more difficult international plane, the collaborative working of young architects and those comparatively young in thought and conviction produced a clearly successful example in the distinguished United Nations building group. It must be granted here that architectural collaboration should be mutual and spontaneous and have an objective, skilful director-chairman, as was the case with UN. With all its shortcomings, the UN is an impressive architectural demonstration of the possibilities of international cooperation. Why then, cannot mutual collaboration be considered on the seemingly less involved national plane?"

"Again, we can suggest national design competitions as a means which will leaven and stimulate opinion and architectural thinking. If the most brilliant design is not always chosen, that design or group of designs may have valuable indirect effects and enlightening repercussions over a period of time. . . .

"In the instrument of well-conducted national design competitions there can be a potential means of expression:

- (1) for valuable experimental thought—and there is such needing support in Canada;
- (2) for encouragement of the younger groups of architects who now seem to receive little official recognition either by competitions or by other means—except as they may be recognized by other countries. Witness for example, Arnold Wasson Tucker* winning one of the top places and one of the commissions for the National University, Mexico City, a few years ago;
- (3) for Mackenzie King's statement: "The development of Canada's Capital is, *or ought to be*, symbolical of Canada itself";
- (4) for raising the broad basic level of governmental architecture, of active interpretation within the profession itself. . . ."

*Editor's note: Mr. Tucker is a graduate of the School of Architecture, University of Manitoba.

Alex Colville Deplores the Gap Existing between Architects and the Public

THE drawings in the last *Canadian Art* of two new Ottawa buildings (for the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Department of Veterans Affairs) are so disappointing to me as a painter, a person interested in architecture, and a citizen, that I am prompted to write my first letter to an editor.

It seems reasonable to believe that a country cannot produce visual art of any significance without developing an architecture which is honest and good. History justifies this statement, because there has been no great period of painting or sculpture in which these branches of art were not related to, and perhaps it is not too much to say subordinate to, good architecture. If architecture is accepted as "the mother of all the arts" the outlook for these arts is not promising in Canada, if they are to be related to the type of building now appearing in our capital.

All artists who appreciate the vital interdependence of architecture and the other visual arts desire our country to produce good contemporary

architecture. This alone might not be sufficient reason for urging the construction of such buildings, but we can add to this reason another: all Canadians surely want buildings which future generations of our country and present generations of mature foreign countries will point to as indications of vitality, courage, and creativeness in our generation of Canadians. We are building for the future, and we hope that the future will not be embarrassed by what we leave behind.

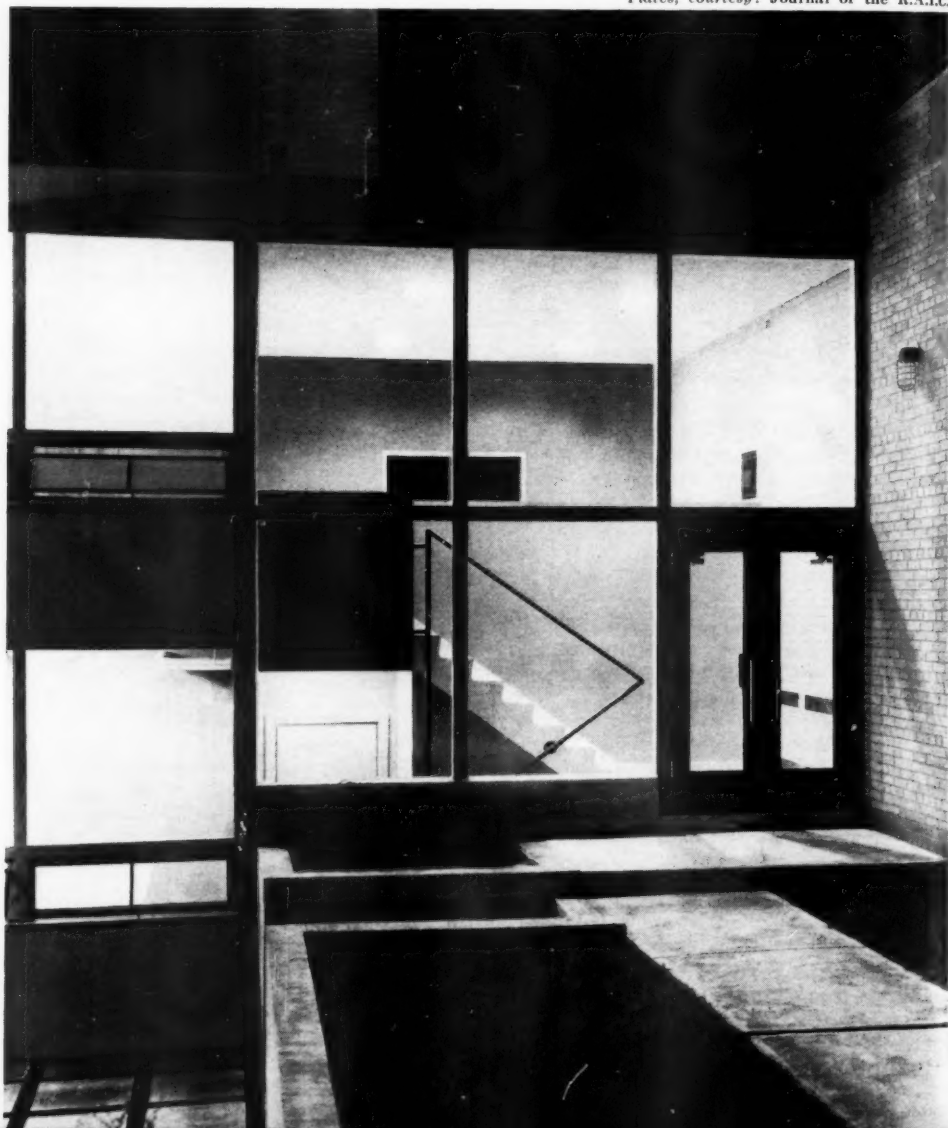
The type of public building that we construct is therefore of real importance to us as artists, as it affects our own work in an indirect way, and it is also important to us as Canadian citizens. If we are not pleased with our present public buildings, we had better find out why they are what they are, and what we can do to make future buildings better.

Before we try to do this, however, let us realize that the production of an architectural masterpiece is not as simple as the production of, say, a masterpiece of painting. In the latter, while the problems are great enough, they are largely individual, solved by the individual; it is unnecessary for the painter to enlist cooperation, approval, and indeed financial outlay on a grand scale, before he puts his planned picture into execution. The architect, on the other hand, is working in an art form in which it is essential that he receive cooperation from the builders and approval from the commissioners, and it is desirable that this be enthusiastic or at least unqualified. Furthermore, the gap between the artist and the public which is a feature of our century, while it is unfortunate enough from the painters' and sculptors' point of view, is even more of a tragedy from the architects' point of view. The painter and sculptor can still produce some works, if he can find a way of keeping alive, but the architect must have the support of the alien public to produce his work. To make things still worse, particularly from the architects' point of view, the individual patron is being replaced by the State, a rather shapeless patron who is very difficult to deal with. Our democracy does not resemble the one in which Pericles approved architectural designs. Without labouring the point further, we can conclude that the problem of producing good public buildings in Canada is not a purely architectural, aesthetic-functional one (our best architects can give us good public buildings without any directives from us) but rather it is the problem of finding a method by which the public commissions good architects to do their best, most original work.

Massey Medals for Architecture

These medals, awarded by the Massey Foundation, on the recommendation of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, serve "to recognize outstanding examples of Canadian achievement in the fields of architecture and thus to give encouragement to the members of the architectural profession and to promote public interest in their work". Under the terms of the awards, they are to be given every two or three years for current architecture in each of a series of categories, with a gold medal for the best of all entries regardless of category. The first awards were made at an exhibition held late in 1950. On the opposite page is shown the Oshawa High School, designed by J. B. Parkin Associates, of Toronto, which received the gold medal. Below is a view of the entrance to the offices of the York Township Hydro Electric System. Designed by the same firm, this building won a silver medal.

Plates, courtesy: Journal of the R.A.I.C.



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Why are our public buildings mediocre? It is not original or startling to say that, although we like to think of ourselves as bold citizens of a new and vital country, our national character is marred by uncertainty and timidity in most of our cultural activity. The buildings that we now have, including the ones under discussion, have been designed, and the designs have been approved, by people who are doing what they believe is best, of whom it might even be said that they are putting into execution the will of the Canadian people. The relationship of people to buildings is not as obscure as the relationship of the chicken to the egg, and we can say that people produce buildings, and even that these buildings in Ottawa have been produced indirectly by the Canadian people, through our democratic system. Thus the failings of the buildings reflect our failings.

How can we produce better buildings? One way, suggested by the above, would be to appraise and try to improve our national character, not with the idea that it is hopelessly bad, but in the belief that it could be improved and, that once it was defined and strengthened, a good architecture would inevitably appear, as I believe it would. However, this method would not bring us good buildings in the foreseeable future, and I do not intend to discuss it here. Instead, let us examine again the relationship of buildings to people. Perhaps we can admit that though buildings can-

not produce people, they can have some effect in forming and moulding people and indeed the whole national character, just as the Constitution of the United States, for example, produced by men of superior character and intellect, in turn has exerted a formative influence on the American people. It is not extreme to say that things produced by good and able men can be valuable in regulating and guiding the conduct of the people as a whole, provided that this regulation is voluntarily accepted by the people.

Working, then, on what seems to be a sound principal, the delegation of responsibility to a small group of men for the purpose of doing a job too specialized for the general populace, or their elected representatives, I present the following skeleton plan, conscious that it may seem a simple-minded attempt to improve a very complex situation, but believing that something like this would give us better buildings, and would do so in a democratic way:

1. Give the responsibility of selecting the best designs, and for administering the whole plan, to a group of men and women who have an understanding of the fundamentals of architectural design. Needless to say, the appointment of these judges would be the most important part of this plan; they would have to be people whose decisions would be respected by both architects and public—such people do exist.
2. Encourage all our best architects to submit

sketch designs of proposed public buildings. In order to do this, advance publicity would have to be given to these projects, the architects would have to be assured that real merit and originality would be recognized, and the reward for the accepted design, both in prestige and money, would have to be large enough to make the contest attractive to many architects.

3. Allow the interested public to enliven these contests by making available to them the nature of the designs submitted, and the reasons for selecting a particular design. This would protect us against any tendency of the judges to become inflexible and dictatorial, and would also be valuable in increasing the public's interest in, and understanding of, architectural matters.

The plan is deliberately presented here in the barest form; the details would have to be supplied by people with a greater knowledge of architecture and public administration than I possess.

Naturally a plan like this would demand a great deal of effort, particularly at its inception, and would involve some expense, but the matter is so important, and the amount of money and effort going into any public building is so great, that a little extra applied at the level where it is most needed, the design level, would be more than justified. With the assistance of some such plan we might produce buildings which, while not faultless, would be satisfying in this time and in future times, as honest, thorough, and gifted expressions of the best qualities of our age.

ALEX COLVILLE

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Further Comments from Our Readers

Dear Sirs:

I have read with interest in your last issue an article entitled "Behind the Scaffolding—A Critical Preview of Official Architecture in Ottawa." Of this article, which contains mostly general considerations on principles of design and where the criticism is really confined to the last two paragraphs, I wish to retain only two aspects:

First, the critic has omitted the most important element if he is to make any valuable comment on the architectural treatment of buildings integrated in a planning scheme: that is the relationship of the buildings with their environments and the possible architectural disciplines imposed by the planner.

Secondly, it has struck me that this article, which contains some very severe criticism of the work of practising architects, should be anonymous. These architects have signed their plans and it seems that a critic should do likewise. I question if it is good policy to favour anonymous criticism.

I am somewhat reluctant to send these comments to you for fear that you may consider I am trying to defend the architectural treatment of the buildings referred to in the article!

Yours truly,
EDOUARD FISET,
Associate Director,
National Capital Planning Service,
Ottawa

Dear Sirs:

You have invited comments on the proposed public building designs for the Ottawa plan.

To ask the people of Canada to buy the design shown for the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is like giving a woman the money to go downtown with instructions to buy a dress like her great-grandmother wore. The embarrassment in wearing it would be no less than the embarrassment Canadians should display if this design is accepted.

The irony of it is that this cumbersome atrocity houses the offices which should be giving national leadership in the realm of architectural design!

Yours truly,
FRANCES JOHNSTON,
Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Dear Sirs:

It is regrettable that the writer of "Behind the Scaffolding" in your Christmas and New Year's issue saw fit to remain anonymous. His (could be her) gentlemanly, but adequate, revelation of a condition which has received only casual attention up to now is to be commended. When are we going to stop picking the bones of our architectural past and applying the decay to our present day building needs in the form of expensive frosting?

Yours truly,
WATSON BALHARRIE, M.R.A.I.C.,
Ottawa

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REFLECTIONS ON CANADIAN BALLET

Continued from page 119

In addition to Arnold Spohr's *Ballet Premier*, I was much taken with the following original ballets:

PLAISIRS D'AMOUR. Presented by the Ottawa Ballet (Director: Yolande Leduc). Choreography: Paul Szilard. Scenery and costumes: Leo Kerz. Music: Claude Debussy.

This was an interesting experiment, not completely integrated, but full of creative choreographic material. Miss Leduc is to be congratulated for commissioning and preparing this work.

L'AUBERGE DÉRANGÉE. Presented by the Vancouver Production Club (Director: Mara McBirney). Choreography: David Adams. Scenery and costumes: Mario Prizek. Music: D. Kabalevsky.

A character ballet, with anecdotal plot, of considerable promise, a rare and difficult attempt and one very worth while making, although Mr. Adams' more experimental *Theorem A* should also be mentioned for its creative thinking.

ÉTUDE. Presented by the Ballet Concert of Vancouver (Director: Kay Armstrong). Choreography: Kay Armstrong. Costumes: Kay Armstrong. Music: P. I. Tchaikovsky.

Small-scale "chamber" ballet beautifully projected which, along with *Rêve Fantastique* and *Première Ballade*, points to Miss Armstrong as one of our most promising young choreographers.

THAT WE MAY LIVE. Presented by the New Dance Theatre of Toronto (Director: B. Shaikman). Choreography: Nancy Lima and Alex Ruben. Décor: Tom Lima. Music: Max Helfman and Earl Robinson.

An ambitious work in a "modern dance" style, rich in expressive mime and emotional projection.

Among the classical revivals, I should mention:

COPPELIA, ACTS 1 AND 2. Presented by the Classical Ballet Company of Ottawa (Director: Nesta Townine). Choreography: adapted by Nesta Townine. Scenery and Costumes: S. Townine.

This reconstruction contained much fine dancing and was beautifully decorated and produced, although the "character" dancing was very weak.

SWAN LAKE, ACT 2. Presented by the Gotshalks Halifax Ballet (Director: Juris Gotshalks). Choreography: adapted, after Ivanov, by Irene Apine and Juris Gotshalks. Scenery: C. Bruce Hunter. Costumes: E. Kalnavarna.

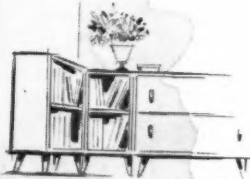
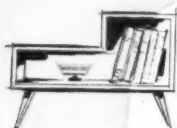
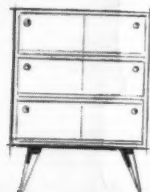
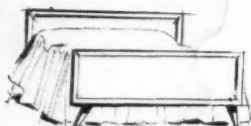
This was a charmingly produced classical revival with some fine dancing by Irene Apine and Juris Gotshalks and some very tidy dancing by a well-schooled, young *corps de ballet*.

The strongest company from the point of view of ensemble performance and standard of dancing was, in my view, the Winnipeg Ballet. However, the Volkoff Ballet of Toronto, the New Dance Theatre also of Toronto, the Classical Ballet of Ottawa, the Vancouver Production Club, the Elizabeth Leese

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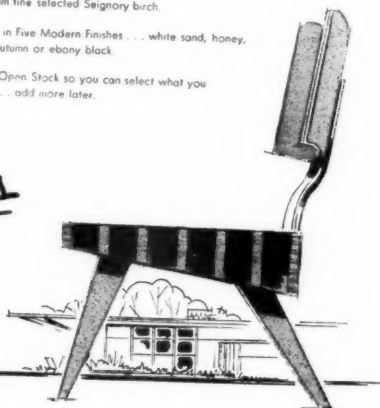
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Ballet of Montreal, the Ballet Ruth Sorel of Montreal, and the Ottawa Ballet all impressed me as companies of great promise.

In the field of décor, I thought S. Toumine's scenery and costumes for the Classical Ballet of Ottawa were the most professional and theatrically effective. Mario Prizek's costumes designed for the Vancouver Production Club's *L'Auberge Dérangée* were, however, very handsome as were André Jamin's for Ruth Sorel's *Tittle-Tattle* and Margot Weltman's for the Ottawa Ballet's *Summer Party*.

There were many dancers, too numerous to mention, who showed great talent and who obviously have had excellent training. They would all be better if they had more opportunities for dancing. This is true of even the best dancers. Irene Apine and Juris Gotshalks, the principal dancers of the Halifax Ballet, who were trained at the famous State Opera Ballet in Riga, are a case in point. Here are two young dancers, with a formidable technical grounding, who attempt material which is technically beyond almost any other Canadian dancer, yet the relative isolation of their home-base, the lack of frequent opportunity to dance before audiences, the lack of contact with a first-rate *maitre de ballet*, are rapidly ruining them as dancers of top quality, and both—but Mr. Gotshalks in particular—are developing unpleasing stylistic habits. This is peculiarly distressing exactly because they are so good fundamentally. Their work as teachers has borne excellent results as could be seen in the work of the young dancers in the Halifax Ballet, yet their teaching cannot maintain their dancing. Anyone with even a scrap of feeling for good dancing will understand me when I suggest that this kind of situation is tragic.

What these dancers (and at least two dozen of the other top Canadian dancers) need is to be gathered into a professional Ballet Company. The 1950 Festival was proof, if proof were needed, that we have the choreographic and dancing talent required to build a creditable Canadian Ballet—which could contribute something of value both to the history of ballet and to the cultural development of this country.

Can such a company find the necessary support? Our present crop of young dancers is ready and waiting, but dancers, whose art is inextricably part of their physical youth—cannot wait too long. Can we solve the problem of "miles per capita" in time?

CONTRIBUTORS

L. A. C. Panton, of Toronto, was recently appointed head of the Ontario College of Art. He was one of the founders of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour; he is also a member of the Royal Canadian Academy, the Ontario Society of Artists and the Canadian Group of Painters.

Charles Comfort, of Toronto, has returned to the haunts of the Group of Seven to do some of his latest paintings.

Guy Glover lives at present in Ottawa where he helps produce documentary motion pictures for the National Film Board.

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The Water Colours of Fred Amess

I SING the praises of the water-colour painter. He who weaves clouds in the sky, turns them into slanting sheets of rain, makes them scurry along in horizontals, or explodes them with bursts of sunshine. A conjurer's art, if he doesn't fumble the trick, as many do in this so apparently simple medium.

Fred Amess is a West Coast artist who finds himself completely happy roving through the rich variety of British Columbia's landscape, painting in water colours. He is fully equipped for his purpose, having been given a strong body to climb its mountains or breast its waters, a quick eye, a fast working brain, a sure hand and a lyrical spirit.

What more can the artist have? Nothing more, apparently, other than a will to press himself forward to the ever-eluding goal of perfection.

This he appears to be doing, if his recent show at the Vancouver Art Gallery has been properly evaluated by the writer and the

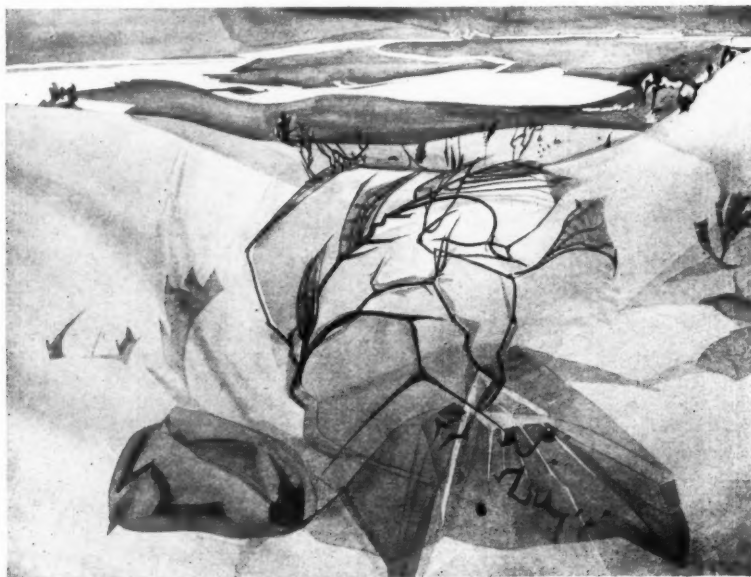
artist, for only the artist can assess himself. He in his secret heart alone knows where he has failed and where he has touched high watermark.

Mr. Amess is a large man, and paints a large landscape, on a large sheet of paper. There is nothing picayune about Mr. Amess. He has Chestertonian proportions of body and, curiously enough, something of Chesterton's mental agility in turning things upside down so that they may appear right—or wrong.

But this only in speech, not on water-colour paper. Here, he is masterly, perhaps too masterly, for the well directed brush can go on its own and make many pleasant artifices in so doing, unless the artist-mind is in control. This by way of warning. One must have one's morning exercises.

For the main body of his work, he uses transparent water colour following the traditional way of using the medium, flowing it on swiftly and with dexterity, in bold washes.

FRED AMESS. *Vasseau Lake. Water colour*



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He enjoys painting spacious inland mountains and valleys, coast mountains with islands lying by, the sea washing over and through the rocks. Indeed, it could be said that Mr. Amess takes all nature within his orbit and deals with it more than adequately.

He is a fine and fast figure draughtsman, keeping himself figure-fit so that he may be able to move the more readily from figure to landscape, or landscape to figure. This is much to be commended. He sketches the underlying structure of his painting with a pen, with pencil or chalk or, not infrequently, he paints directly on to the paper, using his brush as a drawing instrument as the Chinese do.

His line, generally of a curvilinear nature, sweeps and swoops with surety of its end. It is often a witty line—Canadian art has need of wit—and plays lively arabesques within itself.

Occasionally, the tone or colour of the painting outweighs the encompassing line of the structure, in which case the painting lacks oneness, or it may be that the medium when used transparently is too far stretched, and the form becomes meagre. There is a limit to the

use of a medium, and scale to a subject. At least, so the writer thinks, but, as already said, the artist must assess himself as he works, leaving to the public and the critics the last word. When the artist has been freed of his experience, he is done with the painting and is ready to start again.

There is an idea in the minds of some people that the value of a water colour is inferior to that of an oil painting. This is not so. A water colour can be equally as effective as an oil, even when, as is usual, the oil painting be large and the water colour small. Quality is not measured by the area of wall space covered.

Exhibiting societies are inclined to turn their backs on water-colour painting, giving as an excuse the difficulty of hanging "waters" with "oils". It can be done, and it should be done, for Canada has a few excellent water-colour painters whose works should be better known.

One of these is Fred Amess, who has a personal song to sing, and does it well. We commend him to the East.

CHARLES H. SCOTT



MEINDERT HOBBEEMA. *The Two Water-mills.* The painting presented to Canada by the Netherlands in commemoration of the Liberation, 1944-45. It is now on view in the Parliament Buildings, Ottawa.

COAST TO COAST IN ART

The Maritimes Promote Exchange Exhibitions

The exchange of art exhibitions between the Maritimes and other parts of Canada has been successful. The Maritime Art Association and the Western Art Circuit on the prairies have now entered their third season of such co-operative endeavours. Also the Mount Allison School of Fine and Applied Arts in Sackville has pioneered in exchanging displays of its student work with colleges as far west as Alberta. This initiative shown by Mount Allison has proved to be of such interest to other centres that the Art Museum in London, Ontario, this year obtained a comprehensive showing of student work from Sackville and is sending it on a tour of various Ontario galleries.

Outside of Canada, interest in these Maritime efforts is also developing. The Barbadoes Museum and Historical Society recently suggested that an exchange of paintings between Barbadoes and the Maritimes should take place in 1952. Because

of the expense involved, no immediate decision has been made; the proposal, however, has been placed on the agenda for discussion at the annual conference of the Maritime Art Association which is to be held in Fredericton from May 26 to May 28.

Canadian Handicrafts—a Paradox Revealed

The sale of handicraft articles has now reached the stature of big business in Canada. A recent survey shows over two hundred shops in Canadian cities, offering handicrafts as part of their stocks of gift articles. Estimates of annual sales, including direct sales by individual workers, range from two to four million dollars. Yet these figures hide the reality, which is that many of our most skilled experts in the fine crafts still languish for want of popular support.

The current deluge of "folksy" designs and "pin-money" crafts is often promoted by persons who take little or no interest in such more diffi-

cult and exacting skills as fine metal-working and glass-blowing, both of which demand a long apprenticeship.

We have now lost to New York a fine craftsman in silver, Harold Stacey of Toronto. It wasn't as if his work passed unnoticed here; it was shown in many exhibitions, was widely praised. But he received few orders from Canadian gift and specialty shops; later, when the Department of External Affairs gave him a contract to do distinctive silverware for Canadian embassies abroad, the contract was disallowed afterwards, partly because it would have entailed spending government money to buy certain expensive dies needed to produce the silver in the quantity required. Recently Stacey decided that it was impossible to obtain sufficient support at home so he accepted an important post in the United States, where he is now in charge of developing fine silver crafts for the Corning Glass Company.

A conference of all dominion and provincial officials, in charge of developing crafts, is to be held in Ontario this August. It is to be hoped they will pay some attention to this problem.

Welcome Support Provided by the Winnipeg Art Gallery

The officers of the Winnipeg Art Gallery Association deserve full praise for the generous support they are now giving this magazine. Under their new president, John A. MacAulay, and with the aid of their new director, Alvin Eastman, they have embarked on a campaign, not only to expand their existing facilities, but also to widen the basis of art appreciation in their community. To this end, the Association has now guaranteed to buy a minimum of 500 copies of *Canadian Art* each issue for distribution to its members.

We commend this project to the attention of art galleries elsewhere in Canada. If one or two other associations or galleries would act in this way or do as the Federation of Canadian Artists does (it gives *Canadian Art* a percentage of fees received in return for subscriptions made out to its members), then this magazine would be assured of permanent stability, also its services and features could be expanded materially in the years to come.

Canadian Artists Are Offered a Chance to Design Better Postage Stamps

The Post Office Department hopes that Canadian stamps can be better designed in future and it is asking Canadian artists to try to do something to help. They have set a list of subjects

they require and are offering to pay \$300.00 for each and every design accepted by their selection committee. The project is not a competition, but is rather in the nature of an open and continuous appeal to artists to submit appropriate designs for consideration and purchase. The first meeting of the selection committee will take place on approximately April 15th, at which time it is hoped that a number of suitable designs will be available for consideration.

The problem of improving Canadian postage stamp design can only be solved by the active co-operation of artists and designers across the country. The illustration on this page of a recent Canadian stamp, which aims to portray our wealth in fisheries, shows why such help is needed. It should certainly be possible to achieve something better than this example, without too much effort, for this particular design violates to a degree that basic requirement of simplicity, which is so essential to the obtaining of appropriate symbolism in this medium. What we have here is a regular fish-pond crowded into a tiny oblong. Yet we understand most of the protests made to date about this stamp have not related to its design at all; actually they have been mainly recriminations about the character of the fish selected. Every province, it appears, wanted to be represented by its favourite trout or pickerel or gold-eye!

One concludes from this controversy that in a country with such strong sectional differences as Canada you need a complete set of stamps if you are going to depict fish or flowers or animals or farm crops or fruits or even trees or cereals! But why shouldn't we have stamps issued in just such sets? They certainly would have prestige and

Simpler, more effective designs than this recent one for a stamp on Canadian fisheries are needed. Canadian artists are urged to help by sending in new designs to the Post Office Department, Ottawa.





SYBIL KENNEDY

Hockey Player

Bronze

publicity value. The Swiss, for example, successfully advertise their country by means of neatly designed stamps which are issued from time to time in series on specific subjects such as transportation, mountain scenery or native flora and fauna. The story of these Swiss efforts was described in the article, "Wanted! Better Designs for Canadian Postage Stamps", in the autumn 1947 issue of this magazine.

The committee of selection appointed by the Canada Post Office is well informed as far as these problems are concerned and capable of judging wisely. It consists of the Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, P.C. as chairman, assisted by Charles Comfort, R.C.A., Arthur Gladu of the Ecole des Arts Graphiques, Montreal, and one member of the Post Office Department.

Further information regarding sizes and suggested subject matter is contained in a circular issued last November. Copies of this circular may be obtained by writing to the Deputy Postmaster General, Ottawa.

Contemporary Work by Three Montreal Sculptors

More exciting than many of the exhibitions of painting to be seen in Canada these days was the display of work by three imaginative sculptors held in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in February. Louis Archambault and Anne Kahane are abstractionists, experimenters with ideas and materials who create provocative shapes by carving, moulding, hammering and twisting. Sybil

Kennedy is satisfied with modelling the human figure but, like the Germans, Lehmbruck and Sintenis, she exaggerates for greater expressiveness and whether they are in repose or in action—most of them are in action—her attenuated figures are full of human emotion, ranging from deep sorrow to humour. Miss Kahane is warm, too, with an almost childlike joy in reproducing (according to her own fancy) the shapes of people, birds and animals in wood, metal and plaster. She does it with an engaging simplicity which is deceptive, because her apparently childlike efforts are completely artful. Louis Archambault, whose ten-foot iron bird (of welded plates) will represent Canadian sculpture at the outdoor exhibition in Battersea Park, London, England*, this summer, is like a primitive smith who gives form to myths, hammering rusty iron into the symbol of a moose, moulding great staring masks in clay, shaping a polished metal tube into a fish. Not always successful in his heroic works—his tall fish standing on its tail may have been inspired by Brancusi but it lacks the poise and polish and fails to give the essence of fishness as, I am sure, it was intended to do—the powerful artificer is impressive in his ceramic masks and his small, whimsical things are delightful. Among the best examples of these last were *L'Adolescent* and the *Moon Bird*, whose body is shaped like the silver horn of the new moon.

*Editor's note: The London County Council, which sponsors this exhibition each year, invited Archambault to send this example of his work.

with (like the Grand Panjandrum) the little round button on top.

New Centres Added to Western Art Circuit

Western Canada now has thirteen art centres within the Western Art Circuit, seven of which have permanent gallery accommodation, reports A. F. Key of Calgary, who is administering the operation of this successful project. One important addition is in Saskatchewan, where Regina College has recently made its gallery facilities available to the Western Circuit for travelling exhibitions. Supervision there will be by Kenneth Lochhead, formerly of Ottawa, who is the new director of the School of Art at the college. Smaller displays will continue to be shown at the Regina library. Lethbridge Civic Centre has recently agreed to set aside three rooms for art exhibitions and the Brandon Public Library is also providing permanent display space for these travelling groups of pictures. An interesting innovation in the offerings given on this circuit will be an industrial design exhibition to open in Calgary in May.

Announcing a Nova Scotian Retrospective

The Nova Scotia Society of Artists is planning a special exhibition for this spring to celebrate its twenty-fifth year of existence. On this occasion only members of the association will be asked to contribute since the exhibition will be of a retrospective nature. Each member may submit three works, which have already appeared in one of the Society's annual exhibitions, and one new painting.

This means a most active year for the Society, for it was already busy earlier in the season with the largest non-jury exhibition ever held in Halifax. This took place during the winter under its auspices and those of the provincial department of education. Some three hundred works from all over the province were on view at that time. While this may not necessarily spell a renaissance in Nova Scotian art, it does provide evidence of a widening base of both professional and amateur enthusiasm for painting.

New Talent in Illustration—A Correction

The article of the above title by Dick Hersey which appeared in our last issue contained a mistake in one of the captions. The cover design attributed to Ed McNally on page 59 should have been credited to Peter Whalley. Reprints of this article, by the way, are available to any illustrators who may wish to obtain them by writing to the art editor of *The Standard*, Montreal.



Photo: Bob and Dave Asch

LOUIS ARCHAMBAULT. *Bird*

Model for an iron sculpture to be shown at the Open Air Sculpture Exhibition, London, England.

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NEW BOOKS ON THE ARTS

ART OF THE NORTHWEST COAST INDIANS.

By Robert Bruce Inverarity. 262 pp.; 315 ill. + 7 col. pls. University of California Press. (Canadian Distributors: Oxford University Press, Toronto). \$12.00.

The last few years have seen a marked increase in the interest taken in the native arts of the northwest coast of America. Certainly the richest of the indigenous cultures north of Mexico, it has remained until recently a field for the specialist and, although a number of individuals were aware of its aesthetic importance, it was to most people a closed book. True, a large number of technical papers have been written by anthropologists and occasional articles stressing the artistic importance of this culture appeared in magazines devoted to the fine arts, but it was not until 1939 that a more widespread interest began to be apparent. The Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco exhibited a magnificent display of Indian specimens including many from the northwest coast; the Museum of Modern Art in New York published *Indian Art of the United States* by Frederick Douglas and René d'Harnoncourt illustrating other examples, and in 1949 appeared Robert Tyler Davis's *Native Arts of the Pacific Northwest*. The present volume by Inverarity followed so closely on its heels that Davis's book was too late to be included in the bibliography.

For the interested layman, Inverarity's book is easily the best available. The author spent a good deal of his time during the last twenty years on the northwest coast and he has had the advantage of training both in anthropology and in art, two fields to which he has made important contributions. One of the difficulties which confronted him here was the necessity of presenting both the ethnological background of the people of the northwest coast and the aesthetic value of their work in arts and crafts in short compass without sacrificing reasonable completeness of statement or scientific accuracy. This is in the main successful and at least two important items prominent in the culture, the Chilkat blanket and the potlatch, are described better here perhaps than anywhere else.

Another valuable feature of the book is an analysis of the principal characteristics of primitive art, not only on the northwest coast, but throughout the world; then follows a discussion of the art of the northwest coast as it is related to these general primitive characteristics, and I feel that this is the best analysis of that art yet published.

Included in the text are several features of definite value to the student, including references to historical documents; a list of the conventional symbols used in the sculpture and painting of totemic figures; a good diagrammatic map on the end-papers, and an adequate bibliography.

The author stresses the need for more archaeological research to determine whether this culture

developed *in situ* or was modified by influences from other parts of the continent, perhaps, as he hints more than once, from Middle America.

The photographs are numerous and excellent and, indeed, form the most important part of the book. Each specimen illustrated is described in detail and features of special anthropological or artistic interest are pointed out. These photographs were drawn from numerous sources and it is not surprising that some of those which were supplied by the National Museum of Canada have been attributed, in error, to other sources.

Beware of an unfortunate misprint on page 5 in which Marchand's description of a totem pole is attributed to 1771 instead of 1791.

DOUGLAS LEECHMAN

A SYNOPSIS OF THE CANADIAN LAW OF COPYRIGHT. By Harold G. Fox. 19 pp. Toronto: Canadian Arts Council, 25c.

Most artists are unaware of their legal rights to the copyright of the works they create. One remembers the story of A. Y. Jackson suddenly seeing a calendar on which was reproduced one part only of a painting by himself. Actually the law, though far from perfect, goes quite far to guarantee that the author of a work must consent to, and if necessary be paid for, any form of reproduction. This little pamphlet has been written by Mr. Fox, the outstanding authority on the subject, as a contribution to help Canadian artists. It is published by the Canadian Arts Council from whom it may be obtained by all who are interested. It is hoped that authors, artists and composers will pay more attention to the problems here discussed, and will stand up for their artists' rights.

F.R.S.

VAN GOGH. Text by Meyer Schapiro. *The Library of Great Painters*. 132 pp., 50 colour plates. New York: Harry N. Abrams. (Canadian Distributors: Thomas Allen Limited, Toronto). \$10.00.

Since and during Vincent van Gogh's rise to popularity, over fifty books and portfolios have appeared containing anywhere from six to sixty colour reproductions of his paintings. If I had to limit myself to just one of these, I should unhesitatingly choose this book on van Gogh with its fifty reproductions in full colour. Its large plates have amazing colour fidelity to the originals—only in the big, expensive van Gogh facsimile prints has there been truer colour rendition. Further, these fifty reproductions form an astonishingly complete and satisfying colour record of van Gogh's artistic development.

Enough of the more frequently reproduced van Goghs are included to make even a person only slightly familiar with the artist's work feel old acquaintance pleasantly renewed, for here again are *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, *Fishing Boats*, *La Berceuse*, *Sunflowers* and *Wheat Field with Cypress*; while among familiar van Goghs less often reproduced in

colour are *Vincent's Chair*, *Olive Orchard*, and the portraits of *The Postman Roulin* and *Dr. Gachet*; and there are also at least ten pictures never before found in colour in any book, notably two brilliant versions of the fields and hills seen from Vincent's window at Saint-Rémy and *Undergrowth*, softer and sadder, from his last period.

These colour reproductions are what make this new *Van Gogh* so valuable. Their choice amounts to an inspiration on the part of Meyer Schapiro, who selected them and wrote the text, a 24-page introduction and a page of critical analysis for each plate. Unfortunately Mr. Schapiro's introduction is not on the same inspired plane as his choice of pictures. His style is clumsy and his wording academic, with the result that his meaning frequently becomes obscure. For example: "In their revival of portraiture, van Gogh's paintings belong to a sentiment of the individual which is purely of his time; it would be inconceivable before the 1880's, yet rests on the previous art which had seemed to be the end of portraiture."

After struggling through such sentences, I read the analytical paragraphs on the plates only because I felt it my reviewer's duty to do so. I had a most rewarding surprise. While Schapiro's style is never too fortunate, the simplicity of the pictures evidently caused his sentences, when he was writing directly about the plates, to grow more understandable and far more illuminating. Certainly no one has ever done a more penetrating analysis of the paintings. Some of Schapiro's remarks on the familiar portrait of *The Postman Roulin* will indicate how completely he has perceived van Gogh's use of structure and colour to obtain his full effectiveness: "Straight-forward and simple as it looks, the painting is deeply contrived, with many unobtrusive repeats—rhymings of colours and shapes: the green of the beard and the table, the reds of the face and the lower left corner of the picture, the small characteristic angularities, the corner of the table, the lapels, the shirt front, the chair seat, etc. And a challenge to the observer who wishes to understand as well as enjoy: the lightest tone of all, the triangle of white beneath the beard—an unmistakably right and indispensable decision."

A statement in this excerpt sums up exactly what this latest van Gogh book is: "a challenge to the observer who wishes to *understand* as well as *enjoy*" van Gogh.

EDUARD BUCKMAN

THE PICTURE GALLERY OF CANADIAN HISTORY. Volume III. 1830-1890. By C. W. Jefferys. 252 pp., numerous illustrations. Toronto: Ryerson Press. \$2.75.

The appearance of the final volume in *The Picture Gallery of Canadian History* makes it possible to assess the entire series and there is no doubt that Mr. Jefferys has crowned his long career as an illustrator of Canadian history with a work of major importance. These books, while of interest to the general reader, are of particular value to those who study

and teach Canadian history in our schools, and every school should have at least one set.

Yet here in the field of its maximum usefulness there arises a problem. The use of these books should not be restricted to that of a reference used by only one person at a time. But how can these books be used in class work? Although they are reasonably priced they are too expensive for each pupil to buy for himself or for most schools to buy in class sets of forty or more. One way around the difficulty is for the teacher to use an opaque projector. A better plan would be for the Ryerson Press to publish selected pages from the three volumes as additions to the *Ryerson Canadian History Readers* series under such titles as "The Development of Transportation in Canada", "Canadian Sports and Pastimes of Earlier Days" and the like. Such booklets would be within reach of all and would be welcomed by teachers of Canadian history as a practical way of bringing all their pupils into direct contact with the wealth of visual material Mr. Jefferys has so diligently collected.

J. D. FORSYTH

SECOND ANNUAL OF ADVERTISING AND EDITORIAL ART. *Art Directors Club of Toronto*. 118 pp., 175 plates. Toronto: Burns and MacEachren. \$4.00.

It is hard to appraise this second Art Directors Annual on its own merits because it almost insists on comparison with its predecessor; such comparisons have their own inherent dangers.

It would be pleasurable to write that Canadian commercial art, of which this annual exhibits the best, has developed new and exciting means of visual communication, but such is not the case; it would be gratifying to say that a whole group of new names head the lists as award winners, but with only two exceptions, the same group of designers seems to hold its pinnacle unchallenged. It would even be a relief to say that the printing of the annual is improved, but it isn't.

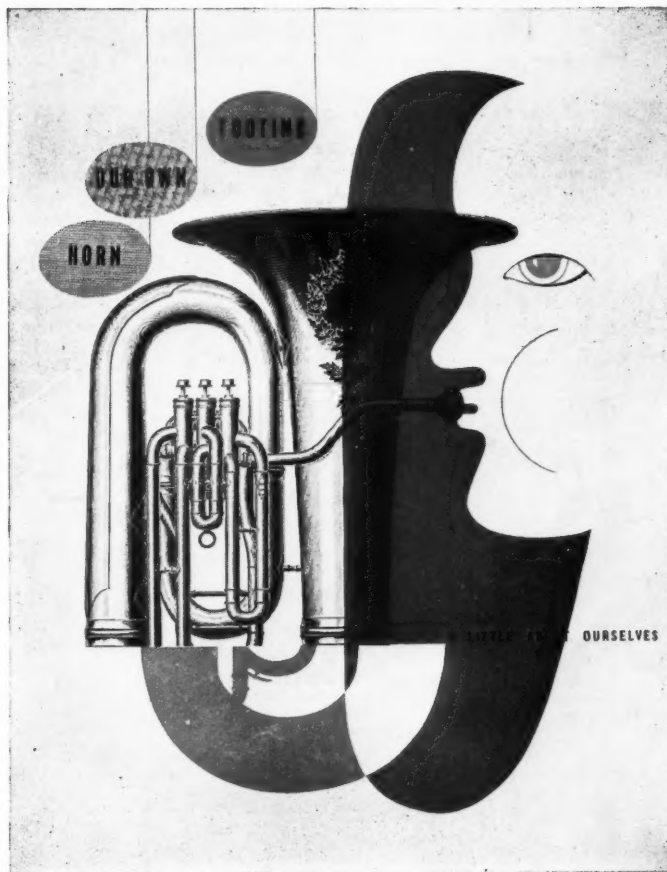
If this were all that could be said, it would be a gloomy picture. The absence of new trends and new names is perhaps an indication of a lack of vitality, but dissatisfaction with this phase should not obscure the fact that Canadian artists are doing good, imaginative design, and that this annual is a catalogue of the best work being done by our top-ranking graphic designers and illustrators. As such it is an invaluable guide, to students and advertisers alike, as to what standards are being *accepted* by the most progressive Canadian advertisers.

The second annual is that and no more; one feels the check-rein of "client acceptance" on much of the work reproduced. But strangely enough, when one reaches the advertising section of the volume where the artist has been allowed to let his hair down, there is a vigour and visual excitement to the pages that are stimulating; it comes as a tonic after the pages of the exhibition work itself. These advertisements are prepared by the very people who produce the mass of Canadian newspaper and magazine

LESLIE TREVOR

Cover for advertising
leaflet by United
Paper Mills Ltd.

Awarded an Art
Directors Club Medal,
1950



advertising; but never have Canadian publications had such lively advertising pages.

One is at a loss to know whether the blame for the difference is to be attributed to the demands of the client or to the inhibitions of the artist when confronted with a commercial problem, but if the talent displayed by the various studios in their own advertising could be hitched up to the problem of selling goods, advertising would gain greatly in visual interest, and ultimately in effectiveness in terms of sales.

If one may be so indiscreet as to point at specific examples, one of the outstanding advertisements for an advertising agency is preceded, by just a few pages, by an advertisement for one of its clients that represents a low point in visual interest. How can one and the same group of advertising specialists touch such extremes of good and bad . . . and why should the client get the worst of it?

This *Second Annual of Advertising and Editorial Art* should provoke many questions such as these; it should arouse concern over the fact that too few young artists are making the grade; it should prod

the top talents out of their complacency and into a quest for new answers to their visual problems. And it should provide a standard to which all advertisers and advertising artists should aspire, if the general level of graphic work is to be raised.

CARL DAIR

THE INDEX OF AMERICAN DESIGN. By Erwin O. Christensen. Introduction by Holger Cabill. xviii + 229 pp. (261 ill. + 117 in colour). New York: The Macmillan Company. (Canadian Distributors: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, Toronto). \$17.25.

"From clay and many skills the potter fashions what he wills." This inscription on a Pennsylvania-German ceramic dish (the first illustration in the book) can also be applied to the book itself. For these two scholars and historians, Christensen and Cabill, have, through the years, gathered the "rich clay" and built it up into a monumental collection of folk art—15,000 faithful paintings of original examples. These paintings form the Index of American

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RUDE ASSIGNMENT

By Wyndham Lewis. In this book, the author tells the whole story of his literary and artistic career, dealing more with his work than with the personal experiences of his life. He describes in his own brilliant and original way the struggles of an independent mind against the forces which militate against creative activity. \$5.00.

**THE RYERSON PRESS
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Design, now housed in the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, and it is introduced to the public in this admirable book.

A "unique and irreplaceable contribution" has been made here, not only to the knowledge of the past in a "backward look", but also to the Davy Crockett "go ahead principle" in American culture.

For the craftsmen whose work is recorded are the bearers of folk memory in the arts; they are close to the grass-roots of the "inventiveness that reshapes forms in response to the needs of a changing environment and the stimulating influence of one tradition upon another." More precisely, they were early standard-bearers of industrial progress and became the forerunners of modern ideas. After having provided their own countryside, through shop practice, with the hand-made tools and functional machinery aimed at solving effort and increasing production, they adapted themselves to the mass-production technology which "was born in a handicraft tradition". Everywhere in the *Index*, the economy of form is in evidence; it has produced beauty, and its character is often monumental, in spite of small size.

The discoveries embodied in this *Index* may well revolutionize the outlook in true American arts and culture. Too much importance, comparatively, has been attached to importations of European art and to the training of artists abroad, and not enough, if any at all, to traditional skills and craftsmanship on this continent. Art museums as a whole could afford no room for them, and most universities have ignored the resources at their very doors. A high authority declared recently that sculpture was not among the accomplishments of American craftsmen; yet this is belied on every page by the *Index*.

The reasons why this research was undertaken, in the bleak days of the depression of the 1930's, were first, a long-felt industrial need for pictorial information on source materials in American design and craftsmanship; second, long-unanswered questions, mostly from Europeans, such as "Is there anything recognizably American aside from Indian material? Where can we see it?" and, third, the Civil Works Administration plan, set up in 1933, to help commercial artists and craftsmen in need of support. The results since have more than justified the expectations; and it is a pity that the plan should have fallen short of the whole field. For instance, scrimshaw or whalers' art seems to have been overlooked—yet it has been outstanding in content no less than in international developments; the master pattern-makers and letterers who were the tombstone carvers of New England have not fared much better. And among the other omissions are: hook-rug making, trade and other silver, embroidery and pattern-making in the French style which had an overwhelming influence on the Indians and spread from French Canada to the Missouri River basin, Louisiana, and the Northwest. Significant as is the work of the Pennsylvania-Dutch and the Shakers, they have received here more than their share of attention in proportion to the French

and the Mexico-Spanish elements, which have been sadly neglected.

The best sections of the *Index* are those that are supported by real quality and beauty in the illustrations; among them: weaving and textiles, quilting, coverlets, crewel work, embroidery, furniture, glass-making.

This is a monumental and epoch-making contribution to the arts and culture of the New World.

MARIUS BARBEAU

DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS. By C. J. Feldsted. 164 pp., numerous illustrations. Toronto: Pitman and Sons (Canada) Ltd. \$5.00.

This is a text-book upon visual design. It deals first with principles of design and then with pattern, advertising and pictorial design, in that order. Its approach is simple and it is gracefully written in comparison to the usual hash of words that one has come to expect as explanatory of illustrations of design. The book itself is well made. The material is presented in a compact and satisfactory form and it will surely fill a useful role in teaching.

One does feel, however, in reading this book that some of the rebellious excitement of modern design has gone. The exuberant ideas of Moholy Nagy or Kepes, which seemed to suggest unexplored worlds of art ahead, are here treated as coldly and as distantly as though they were new centuries ago. Modern design appears to have come of age. Its accomplishments can be digested and neatly folded into the pages of a text. If certain easy disciplined steps are followed a correct modern form will result. Modern design, like other notions of design, has become a matter of common practice and perhaps a little commonplace. No doubt this is the essence of a text-book. Material must be presented without any loose ends leading off in unpredictable directions. Nothing is provocative. It makes me feel old and detached to read in description of Picasso's drawing, *Weeping Head* (a study for *Guernica*, the most moving painting of my lifetime), that the diagonal line between the eyes repeats the diagonals of the nose and jaw and these are balanced by the diagonal in the opposite direction behind the head.

The book does what it sets out to do in a clear and intelligible manner, probably none but I will feel that the lively corpus of modern design has somehow become a corpse.

JOHN BLAND

THE ADVENTURE OF LOOKING. By Hervey Adams. 136 pp. + 40 illustrations in the text. London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd. (Canadian distributors: Clarke, Irwin and Co., Toronto.) \$3.25.

"We should look," says Hervey Adams, "not only with our eyes, but lovingly. . . . It all depends—no, not on the eyes, except in so far as they are the essential mechanism—it depends on the mind, and the will, and the heart; yes, and the whole spirit of man. . . . Gradually, by the deliberate and persistent observation of things which we feel to be lovely, we develop the muscles of our perceptive anatomy. . . ." While some readers may find it rather on

the elementary level, his little book, which grew out of a B.B.C. broadcast, is quite stimulating in the freshness of its enthusiasm and should do much to quicken the awareness of people with lazy eyes. Writing out of his personal experience as a painter, teacher and explorer of the visual world, both natural and man-made, Mr. Adams discusses landscape, architecture, rhythm, line, colour and form, ideas and education and makes an excursion into commercial art. The adventure of looking, he says, is a joyous adventure. But his last word is that art can do more than delight. It can enlighten. He sees it as a powerful force for good in the world.

R.A.

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SYMBOLS, SIGNS & SIGNETS. By Ernest Lehner. 224 pp.; 1,354 ill. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company. (Canadian Distributors: McClelland and Stewart Limited, Toronto). \$10.50.

The jacket of a new book usually harbours a foreword by the editor—or some gifted member of his staff—praising the work in no uncertain terms, the genius of the author, the foresight of the publishers. This eulogistic sales-talk is generally of no value whatsoever. But, in rarer instances, it sometimes happens that this preface is an honest statement of true facts, explaining the contents of the book without undue leanings towards publicity and the sweet sound of the cash-register! This is the case here. And it is good for everyone concerned—except for this saddened reviewer, who can but repeat what has been so aptly said therein, and let his commentary run parallel to that of the book, with which he feels in complete accord.

In Mr. Lehner's very words, this is "a pictorial treasury of symbolic designs for everyone interested in graphic arts". It contains over thirteen hundred signs, illustrating man's persistent effort towards self-expression. From the crudest scrawls to the most esoteric symbols, it shows his pathetic desire to be understood by his fellow-creatures, his constant endeavour to create a "language" comprehensible to all, (a sort of graphic esperanto, so to speak), ranging from the first drawings of the cave-dweller, who did not yet know how to write, to the contemporary marks of the hobo, who has forgotten how to.

In between, the subjects covered range through such interesting fields as astronomy, alchemy, heraldry (this is one of the most interesting chapters—probably the richest—illustrating the love of medieval rulers and knights for "outward distinction, pomp, luxury and splendor") to watermarks, Japanese crests, printer's marks and cattle brands.

These examples give but a feeble idea of the richness and variety of this book, and of the exhaustive research that went into its composition. I feel in complete accord with the editor when he writes: "The general reader will find this record of the growth of civilization fascinating. The artist, designer, typographer, teacher and art student in the graphic arts will find this book indispensable. It is a practical handbook and visual guide through the transformation of simple marks and signs into the complicated emblems of our time—and as such, it contains the history of all human thought".

JEAN SIMARD

STYLE IN ORNAMENT. By Joan Evans. 64 pp., 32 pls. Oxford University Press. (Canadian Distributors: Oxford University Press, Toronto). \$1.35.

This small book is the fourth in its series, and preserves the high level, both of scholarship and of publication, set by the others. The 32 plates show relevant objects from the Late Minoan gold cup from Dendra to a William Morris chintz. The text is devoted to a necessarily brief study of European pattern, its history, its characteristics and its psychological foundation. The first section defines pattern

and traces its two earliest stages, first as a "reassurance of strength" and then, with the growing variety of available techniques, "a reassurance of splendour". Section Two takes up the story of European pattern after the fall of the Roman Empire, and leads on to a discussion of the influences of graphic art on the other arts, by the copying first of manuscript ornament and later of engravings. Section Three is a discussion of the place of Nature in pattern, and the interesting theory is advanced that it is the ages of Security which represent and idealise Nature in their patterns, the ages of Insecurity which are marked by formal and non-natural patterns. One instance of the latter is the period from the fifth to the eleventh century A.D.; another is perhaps the twentieth.

Considering the length of the book, the discussion is inevitably brief and compressed. As an introduction to its subject, however, it is highly to be recommended.

GERARD BREIT

MUSEUM: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Paris. (Canadian Distributors: Ryerson Press, Toronto). \$1.50 per number, \$5 a year.

This quarterly magazine is sponsored by UNESCO with the support of the International Committee on Museums. Its first editor was Dr. Grace Morley, but since her return to her post in the United States, the magazine has been edited by a board of which André L'éveillé, of the UNESCO staff, is chairman. It is the successor of *Museion*, which was published in Paris by ICOM's predecessor, the Office International des Musées, between 1927 and 1945 with a break during the war years. The first volume of *Museum* which appeared in 1948 inaugurated changes in both format and content. The increase in size from octavo to quarto allows the new publication to be more profusely illustrated with larger and clearer plates. Type and illustrations indeed maintain a definite standard of attractiveness, if not of excellence. But another series of changes is of doubtful value. These are determined by the new policy of presenting each article in English and French, whereas *Museion* had appeared only in French. This has had the result of cutting the length of individual contributions roughly in two. Coupled with this is the further disturbing fact that all articles are of almost the same shortness. The former journal had set no such limits on its contributors, and its articles consequently ranged from long treatises to brief notices, as the importance of the material warranted. The 1,500 words now apparently allotted to each author scarcely permit him to develop his topic beyond a brief general statement. All this has been done, judging from the editors' preface, in order to widen the periodical's influence; but one is very much afraid that the goal of popularization is the wrong one in this specialized field. A journal which by its nature is destined to be read almost exclusively by informed workers in the museum field now presents the paradox of offering its readers a diet of rather elementary material! The serious reader will

also regret the disappearance of the numerous technical discussions in the old magazine on restoration, cataloguing, museum architecture and the like. If there is a place for such scholarship at all, surely it is here.

On the other hand there is an advantage, perhaps, in that each number is now often devoted to a single topic with an attempt to give a summary of all the latest developments relating to that particular subject. For example, Volume I devotes its first double number to an admirable survey of the museums of France in the post-war period and its second to educational activities in modern museums throughout the world.

The first number of Volume II contains a graphic

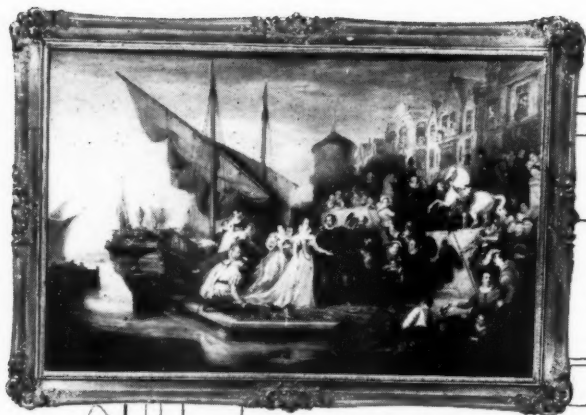
account of the Swedish museums which offer the best example in Europe of intelligent and consistent development. Number one of Volume III covers adequately certain problems arising from the recent restoration of certain works of art. Other numbers made up of miscellaneous articles are of less definite value, except for such contributions as the notes which appear on the state of museums in war-devastated areas. (What will be the reflections of Canadians who do not even possess an adequate building to house their National Gallery when they hear of the new art galleries and museums erected and the scores rebuilt since the war not only in England and France but also in Italy and Germany?)

R. H. HUBBARD

Erratum: On page 109, the phrase, "celebrating his rather exotic interest in the Chinese theatre", should read, "celebrating Dr. MacCallum's rather exotic interest in the Chinese theatre".

Designed by George Englesmith, M.R.A.I.C., A.C.I.D., these display stands—they total 35—have been combined with a group of historical objects and contemporary furniture to form a large exhibition entitled "Industrial Design 1951 B.C.—A.D. 1951". This opened in January at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, came in March to Ottawa and is now being sent on a tour of Canada by the National Gallery of Canada. It is to be shown at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in April and Calgary in May.





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THE ART FORUM

Dear Sirs:

The condition of painting and sculpture in Canada has reached the point at which a sound critical view must be established. Painting has not progressed significantly within our borders—not even those who have studied in Mexico, Europe or elsewhere have returned with works beyond our standard level of mediocrity. They bring back a debasement of an idea or attempt to superimpose a superficial “foreign” colouring upon Canadian themes. Those who do not leave play around with the old formulae, or dabble with modernism. Yet articles in our magazines and newspapers, with a complacent attitude equalled only by the self-satisfaction of the artists, praise and marvel at the vigorous, creative, lively qualities, etc. to be found they suppose in Canadian art. Such statements are falsifications of the actual conditions.

The quality of the reviews of exhibitions and the total lack of informed criticism are the most lamentable feature related to our painting and sculpture. These articles either reveal stupidity, disregard of integrity and intellectual honesty, a protective avoidance of the outside world or a sensitivity even less developed than that of the artists. These pointless reviews and articles are not the competent criticisms which they purport to be. The glancing analysis of the arts which they give is a venomous censorship formulated simply and effectively by what is not said, by what is not mentioned and at times by such a distortion of fact that the point of reference is obscured without any other apparent justification than an optimistic propagandism of the development of our art for home consumption. Beyond our borders any claim or notions concerning the significance of Canadian art are ridiculous. The calibre of the comments must be improved from the present polite social chat regarding the smears on our gallery walls. The artists must awake or be wakened from their slumber. The reviewer must develop and unmercifully use a standard of judgment based upon the best works from the long history of art—not just in mild relationship to the questionable Group of Seven.

None of the articles reveals a consistent or progressive point of view—if any mature concept is reflected at all. Criticism is needed now, disinterested and idealistic. Criticism that will admit an interest in what is being created in the external world—and since this is for Canada also—what has been created within the last twenty or thirty years. The present reviewing must be replaced by constructive criticism from intelligent and perceptive men. The unbiased conclusions from such comparative investigation will be embarrassing to those who foster the optimistic view, even though they raise the excuses for the made in Canada label. The narrow minded, self-laudatory artists and reviewers must be unmasked. One might say: just another case of the blind leading the blind—but the situation is far too serious. The critic must have an understanding of the technical

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as well as the formal approach towards painting and sculpture, combined with an excellent general knowledge of art history and an avid interest in contemporary American and European developments. . . . prevalent regional policy, sanctimoniously maintained, of never looking beyond our borders or too often city limits must be abolished—anything will appear good or adequate when seen in no other context but its own.

The consequences of a sincere historical treatment coupled with penetrating criticism of contemporary Canadian work would be far reaching and equivalent to a total revision of the vague ideas which embellish with undeserved haloes the arts in Canada.

Our unintelligent plagiarism of the obvious and less important qualities of the progress of others is childish mockery. No one points this out, there is only the pitiful acquiescing in the *status quo* evinced in the reviews. The reviewing which mentions only “safe” names, i.e. referring to artists who have been around too long offering too little but have finally made an impression upon the minds of the reviewers by repetitive performances, must be eliminated. Intelligent criticism is urgently required. It would aid immeasurably in laying a foundation for the future development of the arts in Canada. Until now what there has been of it has been snow-bound with the arts.

Yours truly,
R. L. BLOORE,
New York City

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